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MEMOIR OF FATHER DIGNAM, S.J.

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OF

FATHER DIGNAM, S.J.

J.J.M. LANDY
411 QUEEN W.
TORONTO

Easter 1914

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S. IGNATIUS de LOYOLA.

A MEMOIR OF

FATHER DIGNAM

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS,

WITH SOME OF HIS LETTERS.

Second Edition.

REVISED AND WITH PREFACES
BY
FATHER EDWARD IGNATIUS PURBRICK,
AND
FATHER JOHN G. MACLEOD,
OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

"I will raise Me up a faithful priest who shall do according to My Heart."

J. M. LANDY
610 QUEEN W.
TORONTO

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1906.

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TO THE

INSTITUTE OF THE POOR SERVANTS OF

THE MOTHER OF GOD

This Memoir

OF THEIR

BELOVED SPIRITUAL FATHER

WHOSE NAME IS EVER IN BENEDICTION

AMONGST THEM

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE following Memoir of a holy and devoted Father of the Society who, however, led a very unobtrusive life, may, as being the outcome of a grateful heart, be open to the suspicion of an excessive partiality likely of its own nature to interfere with justice of appreciation.

But a little knowledge of the persons concerned, or of the circumstances which cemented their friendship, would of itself be enough to dispel all such apprehension. Though Father Dignam was not a man to thrust himself forward upon public notice, yet Providence so arranged it that one large part of his ministerial duty should lie in the formation and direction of nuns, a work for which he was eminently fitted, and that in that line of Apostolic ministry it should fall to his lot to assist, during a long course of years, the author of this Memoir in the organization, and construction, both internal and external, of a new Congregation, or Institute, of religious women.

She has, therefore, had abundant opportunities of observing the principles upon which he acted,

as well as of gaining the fullest insight into his methods, into his character, with all its patient, indomitable persistence in spite of difficulties, its intense gift of sympathy and its consequent power of influencing others, and into the results and fruit of his work for souls, especially in the kind of work already indicated.

Under the same Providence another long period of his priestly life was devoted to the revival and perfect establishment of the Apostleship of Prayer in this country, a work in which he, in his turn, was encouraged, assisted and sympathized with by the author. And so in this all-absorbing interest of his on behalf of the Divine Master, she had anew every opportunity of knowing him most thoroughly.

In addition to all this, the author of this Memoir has had the advantage of access to Father Dignam's most intimate correspondence, kept up for forty years with a beloved sister, to whom he was attached, not only by ties of blood and loving family intercourse, but by spiritual bonds of a much more stringent kind, as he attributed to her his entrance into the Society of Jesus — in other words, the one chief happiness of his life.

To her, when he was still a scholastic, he opened his whole soul; and after his elevation to the priesthood, in repaying her for all she had done for him, by undertaking the direction of her soul, he necessarily disclosed the secrets of his own.

Hence in this biography the reader is not left to

the mercy of the author, or compelled to study the subject of it through a distorted or discoloured medium, but has the materials for forming his judgment without bias furnished him unconsciously by the Father himself.

The letters, indeed, are not preserved and printed on account of any literary merits they may or may not possess. That they should possess any, is hardly to be expected in the letters of one who wrote generally under pressure and in the midst of interruptions. But they show their writer for what he was—a Religious consistently and wholly devoted to his vocation from first to last; a man of the Exercises, ever forming himself upon the teaching of St. Ignatius and, in consequence, ever growing in personal attachment to our Lord and in devotion to His interests, and truly on fire with an unquenchable zeal for the promotion of the devotion to His Sacred Heart.

It can hardly be doubted that the possession of his *ipsissima verba* will be highly prized by those who were wont often to listen to his spoken instructions, that they will perceive with joy how nothing that he said was artificial or invented for a purpose, but that he simply gave out everywhere and always that of which he was full—an asceticism wholly based upon personal enthusiastic love of Jesus Christ, and moulded upon the methods and suggestions of St. Ignatius, which, during all his Jesuit life, had been his constant and affectionate study.

Those who knew him will find their memory refreshed by many a maxim which they had listened to as it fell from his lips, and those who did not know him will be enabled to understand something of the secret of his influence over souls, and power of leading them to perfection along the royal road of the Cross.

Above all, the book will be a treasure and a possession for ever to that devoted family of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, for whose sake it has principally been compiled, and may well remain amongst them—a text-book of the spirit which he and the author of his Memoir have desired should ever animate the Congregation.

EDWARD IGNATIUS PURBRICK, S.J.

1895.

SECOND PREFACE.

DURING the interval which has elapsed since the first publication of the Memoir of Father Augustus Dignam, S.J., three events have occurred which have added considerably to its value and interest. The first of them is that its authoress—Mother Mary Magdalen Taylor, S.M.G., supplemented that volume by another containing Retreats given by Father Dignam; and then, again, in 1901, by a selection of Conferences delivered by him and

introduced by a Preface from the pen of his Eminence Cardinal Mazzella, S.J. These serve as a kind of *Imprimatur* setting the stamp of genuineness as well on the spiritual character attributed to Father Dignam in the course of his life and work, as it does on the sound appreciation of that character formed by one who had every opportunity for many years of studying his lines of thought, his sympathies, and his methods of action, and of noting how faithfully the lessons and virtues which he urged and inculcated on others were practised by and illustrated in his own life.

It is this conviction which recommends to the reader the record of a very simple, unadorned, and uneventful career rendered all the more practically useful to us by a personal intimacy with him which has been so close and so recent. Then the good fruit which it has produced in many souls is urged as a motive for making a still greater number of persons acquainted with the zeal and piety of this holy Religious.

But a new element of value and interest is imparted to this Life by the fact that Mother Taylor has herself been summoned hence, so that we have now an opportunity of recalling past incidents in her own life which helped to form her spiritual character, thus drawing her into the fold of the Church, and developing in her soul that intense love for the Mother of God and zeal in the service of the poor, and more especially that deep

devotion to the Sacred Heart which she imbibed from, and so largely shared with him, as to become through it associated with him in establishing and extending more widely the Confraternity of the Apostleship of Prayer; nor had its chief organ for promoting the spirit and advocating the interests of the Sacred Heart—the little pink *Messenger* which has now become so world-wide in its dissemination and influence, a more zealous and laborious apostle than Mother Taylor.

But she was much more than a most practical and energetic external worker, her heart was deeply imbued with the interior spirit of devotion towards God, of faith and trust in Him, and she stood in need of both these. Like all those called to achieve a solid and abiding work she started from very small beginnings laid in humility, built up gradually in much patience, but not the less persevered in with a courage which succeeded in overcoming all difficulties, obstacles, and discouragements. It was in 1875 that the writer frequently said Mass for the little band forming its slender community, then living in a small back alley close to Farm Street, and having for its chapel an exceedingly small and retired cenacle at the end of a long passage.

Mother Magdalen served an excellent probation for her many and various works of future usefulness by the trying life on which she entered, when in 1854 she accompanied Miss Nightingale's contingent

of nurses to the Crimea, and when in the course of God's Providence she was brought into contact with Catholic soldiers, Catholic chaplains, Catholic surgeons, and Catholic Sisters of Mercy, she became soon convinced that the true religion alone could teach its followers such heroic patience in suffering, and such genuine self-denying charity in tending the sick and wounded, as she daily witnessed around her.

But to a singularly practical zeal for work Mother Taylor added literary abilities of no mean order. This her well-known books written in comparatively early life, and still held in much favour, amply testify, among them being *Tyborne; Irish Homes and Irish Hearts; Dame Dolores; Stoneleighs of Stoneleigh; Convent Stories.* To them we must add works of a biographical character, among them being her *Life of Father Curtis, S.J.; Ven. Jeanne de la Noue;* and the *Inner Life of Lady Georgiana Fullerton.* A still more sustained effort characterized her Editorship for some time of *The Lamp*, followed by the yet more ambitious undertaking, the inception namely of *The Month*, which the Fathers of the Society of Jesus took over from her hands after it had run for a sufficiently long time to claim for it the warranty of success.

Lastly, it was the natural outcome of her Crimean experiences and the capable knowledge there acquired, and sufficiently matured since, that entitled her Religious Congregation to be entrusted

with the foundation and direction of the "Providence Free Hospital," still doing a flourishing work at St. Helens, Lancashire. Such are the chief, though only some of the good works which this holy foundress and first Superior General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God has left behind her, after each of the five who so long ago knelt beside her, and besought our Lady to be the Mother, Mistress, and Superior of the Institute had gone before. And in answer to their prayer, never forgotten, though its accents have now passed away, it is our Lady's hand which still continues their work and guides their little barque, and will extend their borders to fresh fields of labour, as it has already planted them in the midst of large and important cities, and surrounded them with many influential patrons.

JOHN G. MACLEOD, S.J.

Roehampton,
January 23, 1906,
Feast of the Espousals.

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CHAPTER I.

VOCATION.

"He that loveth Me, I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

AUGUSTUS DIGNAM was born in London, on the feast of the Apparition of St. Michael, May 8th, 1833.

He may be said to have been "a child of benediction." He was born of excellent Catholic parents, whose first thought was to bring up their children in the fear and love of God and of their holy faith. His father was a solicitor. His home was one of those rarely, if ever, to be found in the present day, where the children (four sons and two daughters) lived in love and harmony, looking up with respect and affection to their father, and with tender love on their mother.

His mother greatly influenced him—it has been well said that "it is to our mothers we, all of us, owe our first impressions of everything, impressions that sink deepest and last longest, and are the most productive of good of any natural impressions we receive in our whole lives."[1]

From his mother he learned a deep reverence

[1] Rev. Father Kingdon, S.J.

for holy things, extreme unselfishness and that sweet courtesy which made him so truly *debonnaire*. The four brothers were all fond of the Offices of the Church, and were often to be seen, a pretty group, serving at Mass and Benediction, and singing at Vespers. There is no record of his First Communion Day; but it was probably from that date that he possessed an extraordinary devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Tears would flow from his eyes at Exposition or Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament; though he carefully hid them at the time, and only long afterwards told his sister of the fact and of the gushing feeling of love he felt always before the Altar and Tabernacle.

The boys were all sent as day scholars to the City of London School, where a very excellent education was to be obtained. This school has lately been brought more into notice by the brilliant success of one of its scholars. Mr. Asquith, Home Secretary (1892—1895), thus speaks of this school in which he was educated:

"Though an ancient foundation, the City of London School, as a school, had only existed since the beginning of the reign of the Queen. They had no ancient traditions to feed upon outside the academic world. They had hardly any great men they could appropriate to themselves. They had not that which was regarded by most people, not only as an inseparable incident, but as the essence of an English public school—a playground. Instead of those spacious, attractive, and romantic surroundings, under which the life of most of the great

public schools were carried on, they spent their days, not only within the sound of Bow Bells, but the roar of the traffic of Cheapside itself.

"All this would be regarded by the outside critic as drawbacks and disadvantages, but he was not at all sure that there was not a good deal to be said on the other side of the account, and that there were not some influences that they enjoyed, and by which they benefited, that were not within the reach of their contemporaries of Eton, Winchester, and Harrow.

"He remembered, a good many years ago now, when the City of London School were winning scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge, and were rather throwing the old foundations of the country into the shade, that an article was written by an eminent schoolmaster of the day, the present Dean of Westminster, in which he endeavoured to account for this somewhat disquieting phenomenon, and the explanation which he gave, and which had in it more than one element of truth, was this—that the town-bred and town-educated boys, brought into contact, as they were every day of their lives, with the sights, sounds, and life of a great city, brought into their reading an element which could not be contributed from elsewhere; mixed their knowledge with actuality and reality, and, thereby, when they came into open competition with those who had spent their youth in the cloistered and sequestered seclusions of the great public schools of the country, they were better equipped for the fray, and could render a better account of such education as they

obtained. He believed there was a great deal of truth in that view of the matter. For his part, when he looked back on his own school life, he thought not only, and, perhaps not so much of the hours which he had spent in the class-room or in preparing lessons at night—he thought rather of the daily walks through the crowded, noisy, jostling streets; he thought of the river, with its barges, its steamers, and its manifold active life; he thought of St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and the National Gallery; he thought even sometimes of the Houses of Parliament. These might be the illusions of youth; but he was certain there was not one among them who would not agree with him that the presence and the contact of this stimulating environment contributed a large and most influential element in their youth." [1]

The boys learnt French (in which Augustus for one became a proficient) in the evening from their eldest sister, who had been educated by the Ursuline Nuns at Boulogne. When these nuns settled at Boulogne after the French Revolution, Mrs. Dignam was one of their first pupils, and thither she sent her eldest daughter.

A strong feature in his character, and one that lasted through life, was his unfailing cheerfulness and keen sense of humour. He was full of fun, and greatly enjoyed a joke, and he sometimes deplored the heaviness of people who could never seize the meaning of a fine point of raillery or a

[1] Speech delivered at banquet given by the Old Boys of the City of London School.

stroke of irony. In his bright and witty conversation he never gave pain, and his presence was always sought after.

There was a great vein of seriousness in Augustus, and his characteristic was earnestness in everything. When he was about twelve years old his mother gave him a desk, and he began to write. He formed in writing an imaginary class of people, describing the character of each and the advice he would give to them in their different circumstances.

Then he declared that his ambition and intention was to "write a penny book," his reason being that the poor people had few good books which they could afford to buy—most literally true in those days—and thus we see the first evidence of that love for the souls of the poor which manifested itself so strongly in his later life.

His home life was happy and merry, and he enjoyed the pleasures which came in his way. These were innocent enough. There was a large circle of relatives and friends. One family of cousins alone numbered thirteen, of whom nine were daughters. Among them all there was plenty of amusement to be found, dancing, singing, private theatricals; but of the world in its general and grosser sense they knew nothing; the blessed shadow of home was around them. One of his cousins gives us a picture of the household at this period. Writing to his eldest sister, she says:

"Augustus and Sylvester were my two favourites among your brothers. It always seemed to me

that we were one heart and soul, thinking, wishing, and feeling always alike. When on a visit to your dear home I was much struck by the respect, deference, and sincere affection shown by both of them to their dear parents. I don't know which had the most loving nature; I rather think it was Augustus."

But a void was now about to be made in this happy family life. In Lent, 1847, the celebrated Dr. Gentili gave a Mission at Moorfields, and the eldest sister felt called to embrace religious life. She sought the advice of Father Brownbill, S.J., and after he had made her wait six months, she left her home in November of that year.

It was a fearful wrench. "She was the light of my father's eyes," Augustus used to say; and to her mother she was everything.

To him this eldest sister was a sort of second mother.

However, her entrance into Religion was not destined to break the tie between them, but rather to strengthen it more and more till it became a twofold one. "What are we to do without you?" they all said.

"When God calls we must obey," was the answer, and none of those true and loving hearts could say nay to God, so she went.

She entered the Convent of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of St. John Lateran, at Bruges, and therefore was more separated from her family than if she had chosen a convent in England.

When Augustus was eighteen he paid her a visit at Bruges, and from that time kept up a correspondence with her, of which many letters have been preserved, and this correspondence gives us great insight into his character, for he reposed entire confidence in his sister, and wrote to her with utter unreserve.

In answer to her letter of congratulation on his majority, he writes:

"It made me think, think, think for ever so long. I need your prayers, indeed, for twenty-one sees the faults of twelve in full luxuriance," and he begs her to write to him again, "A few words now and then from you will aid more in a *very hard* struggle than sermons and books together."

We do not know the nature of the hard struggle to which this letter alludes. It is remarkable that though Augustus was of such an affectionate nature, caring for each member of his family with a deep and intense love, his heart was never attached to anyone outside the home circle. In later years he told his eldest sister that he was never in love, nor had ever felt any inclination towards the marriage state.

This entire detachment of heart may have had its effect in producing in later life that deep power of sympathy which aided others so much. The seriousness of his character is evinced by his style of reading; he was evidently well acquainted with the Lives of the Saints, and the late Mother Prioress of Bruges must have thought highly of his earnest

character when she gave him Father Lessius' treatise *De Divinis Perfectionibus*.

His sister naturally longed and prayed that he might be called to religious life, and wrote to him urging him to reflect on this subject. She had to wait long for an answer. At last he wrote that he had been debating the subject in his own mind, had consulted his confessor and at last had come to the conclusion that he should *try* his vocation—but he did not know whither to turn his steps—he knew so little of Religious Orders, and ends, "Help me, dear, in my need; I want to *make haste*."

His sister advised him to apply to the Jesuit Fathers, and he accordingly presented himself to Father Waterworth, then Superior of the residence in Hill Street. He seems to have gone on St. Joseph's day, as afterwards, speaking of his devotion to St. Joseph, he said:

"The dawn of my vocation came to me on his feast."

Father Waterworth tested his vocation by long waiting; he lent him Père de Ravignan's treatise on the Society. He read the book, and one sentence in it took possession of him and never left his memory:

"Oh, God, I bless Thee, and I give thanks to Thee, for thus Thou hast fixed my life and assured to me for ever my blessed existence."

He also came into possession of Père Lallemant's *Doctrine Spirituelle*. Many years afterwards he writes: "*Doctrine Spirituelle* is the book over every page of which my eyes welled up tears when in

blindness and misery, in 1855, I was asking from the depths—'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' Every letter of it is of gold."

His vocation must have been strengthened by the example of his cousins, five of whom went into Religion. One to the Dominican Convent at Stone, one to the Carmel at Llanherne, and the three others to Bruges. The last of these was apparently entering her convent about this time. He speaks of her later on, when she was lying on her death-bed, as "the one who taught me in some mysterious way what virtue and self-conquest were before I knew how to give them a name."

During this time of suspense, Augustus and his mother had long conversations. He now thoroughly understood what the life of a Jesuit was, and that after the Noviciate he must enter upon a course of hard study to last many years; and he was not well equipped for this. He must, therefore, work the harder to make up for lost time. But how was this to be done? for long application to study always brought on bad headaches; so his mother was anxious. But Augustus, urged on by the wonderful force of vocation, could see no difficulties that might not be overcome.

Augustus related to a friend afterwards the history of his final visit to Father Waterworth: "One day I was at a lunch party in Piccadilly, when suddenly I bethought myself that it was a long time since I had called on Father Waterworth; so off I went and found him, and he said to me: 'Well, I have good news for you; you are accepted,

and may enter at Beaumont on February 9th.'" (Beaumont Lodge was then the Noviciate house.)

A great friendship seems to have sprung up between Father Waterworth and the young aspirant. It was certainly strong on the side of the latter. Writing to his sister in 1865, he says :

" I have some hope of seeing Father Waterworth again this year, whom I have only seen once for a moment or two since I bade him adieu at Farm Street — how many years ago? I cherish his memory warmly, as one of God's instruments for my happiness, and read his works with an especial affection."

Ere Augustus passes away from his home, let us cast a glance at his character. In after-life he took a most severe view of his early days. But it is clear that the vanity, petulance, and selfishness, for which he blamed himself, were but faults on the surface. There never was a break between him and his God. He was by no means frivolous ; his mind was cultured, he was fond of poetry, music, and architecture, a great reader of general literature, and for amusement was devoted to the works of Dickens, then quite a novelty ; he had a good ear for music and an excellent voice ; he was handsome, with very attractive manners, and was sought after, and an immense favourite with all his friends and acquaintances. So that if God had not mercifully called him away, he might have been altogether taken up with the things of this world ; but he tells his sister he had " a taste for quiet." Both he and his brothers used often to say, with wonder and

gratitude, that they could not understand how it was that they had been so preserved from the sight and knowledge of evil, and how they had always shrunk back from anything that was low and base.

Augustus never neglected prayer or the Sacraments. He had always a profound reverence for God and the things of God, a strong sense of his own defects and incapacity, and that spirit of deep gratitude to God and to others which is the distinguishing mark of the humble; in fact he walked steadfastly in the same path from the beginning to the end—at first along the level road, picking the flowers at his feet, afterwards climbing the hills and the mountain passes that lead so sternly to the summit of perfection. As we look at him we cannot but be reminded of the young man whom Jesus looking on loved. He also could humbly say that he had "kept the Commandments from his youth." He did not go away in sadness but accepted the Master's call: "If thou wilt be perfect." He gave up home, brethren, father and mother, and all that was alluring to his young and ardent nature, and *followed Him.*

. . . . . .

The Forty Hours' devotion began on Ash Wednesday, February 6th, at the church nearest to his home, and he attended this with great devotion, and then on the 9th he left all he had in this world and went to the Noviciate.

Those who afterwards received such great benefit from his direction might have said:

> Blessed be the year, the time, the day, the hour,
> When he passed through those gates.

His own account in later life was "that a certain very limp and unbaked hobbledehoy arrived at the Noviceship."

The door was opened by a novice. They looked at each other in astonishment, for they had been old acquaintances in the world. Brother Thomas Murphy had never expected Augustus Dignam to follow him to the Noviciate. It was thought a strange coincidence that after persevering together in the Society for nearly forty years, Father Thomas Murphy should almost, as it were, open the portals of the grave for his fellow-novice, dying, as he did, only a few hours before him.

The first few weeks were rather hard; but the clouds soon passed away, and he wrote:

"A novice of six weeks old, and I am indeed happy. I was admitted on Monday, 18th." (After a week's retreat.)

Some months went by, during which he earnestly endeavoured to learn the lessons set before him, but the real turning-point of his life seems to have come when he made the long retreat of thirty days, which all Jesuits make twice in their lives—once during the first year of their noviciate, and again during the last probation before the final vows.

Then it was that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in all their beauty and majesty dawned upon Augustus. In after years, he once said, speaking of this great retreat: "I used to sit there, the tears running down my cheeks. I could not help it. I could not stop them. The meditations were like revelations to me. I never thought—I

never dreamt of such things before." It was probably during this retreat that he had that "transport of love and sorrow" of which he told his sister, while meditating on the words in the hymn of St. Francis Xavier—*pro me peccatore*,

And all for me, a foe to Thee.

And it was surely during these precious days that he received that gift of deep contrition which he possessed during his whole after-life.

From henceforth he gave himself heart and soul to the Divine Heart of his Master, a disposition which was to grow and deepen and strengthen unto the end.

He wrote to his sister during the Exposition at the Triduum: "I recalled your words: 'What a happy year it has been for you.' Yes, the year had passed, and I knelt before the same Lord as I did last year at the Forty Hours, and thought of all He had given me—all He had rescued me from; the graces only to be estimated in eternity crowded into that one short year. Oh, my heart echoed your words, 'What a happy year.' And yet the year gone is a serious thought."

. . . . . .

"You complain that I have treated you shabbily in not sending notes of the Long Retreat. Never shall I forget how I drank in the meditation of the Prodigal Son. It truly realized the description of the thirsty traveller and the oasis in the desert. . . . 'Love to be unknown.' This is the great work of the month; it should fill the soul with every principle

and every sympathy which beat in the Heart of Jesus."

He and his sister had hoped that his brother Sylvester might have a religious vocation, but he now seemed to be turning his thoughts in quite a contrary direction. She was desponding on the subject, but Augustus was full of hope.

He writes to her: "You talk of my daring to go on hoping. Is it daring to hope while we know that the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary beat for us in Heaven? *If you had not hoped should I ever have been here?* Do you begin now, so late in the day, to talk of *daring* to hope?"

. . . . . .

"If he could only think for half an hour quietly on himself and what is wanting to his happiness, if he only knew how to read his own heart, COULD he fail to behold one of those of whom Father de Ravignan speaks when he says, 'Many strong and ardent natures are not in the place Providence has marked for them.' Oh, for a Retreat."

At another time he wrote: "In the Society external faults must be eradicated by a stern, decisive will and a rapid hand. May the same powerful prayer that procured the first great grace for me gain the grace of graces, to persevere."

A Father who was a novice at Beaumont at this time thus writes of Augustus:

"I found Brother Dignam at Beaumont Lodge when I began my noviceship in March, 1857. He was always good, cheerful, charitable, obedient, and he got along like Zachary and Elizabeth, without

blame, without complaint, without getting into any scrapes."

The second year of the noviceship was far harder than the first. His trials were much more severe. Father Clarke knew that he had to deal with an absolutely generous soul with high aspirations.

The Father wanted to make a saint of his novice, and he led him down deep into the valley of humiliation. It was hard work for one who had been so loved and sought after to find himself treated as incapable, useless, and altogether unworthy of notice. He thoroughly believed this. He never flinched, and his one fear was lest he should be dismissed.

"I lived in perpetual apprehension of being sent away. I could not believe that they would keep me," he said afterwards.

There was some impression that Father Clarke was rather hard upon him, but the novice did not share this opinion. Writing to his sister seven years later, he thus speaks of his Novice Master:

"You ask in one of your letters after Father Clarke. He died in London about a year after he left the Noviceship, and I never saw him again; but if he enjoys no other crown than for what he did for me—if it is not vanity to say so—it would, I believe, be an enviable one. Certainly it was a very special grace, and one which will take me many a year yet fully to appreciate. He died in great reputation for holiness, and was indeed a Jesuit of the true Ignatian stamp. So many of the traits which Bartoli relates of St. Ignatius are (to me)

strikingly characteristic of him, especially as regards the treatment of souls."

At last came the joyful day when he was told he would be admitted to take his first vows—the long suspense was over. He must have felt like a mariner who, after buffeting with the waves and clinging to a spar, finds himself safely in port. He took his vows on the feast of the Holy Crown of Thorns; he always remembered Father Coleridge saying to him, "I shall say Mass for you on the feast of the Thorny Crown," and in 1887 he again alluded to the day which has "stuck in my memory—the feast of the Thorny Crown, on which I took my vows."

It was rather singular that this feast should have been chosen for his vows. All Religious certainly accept in an humble way their share of the Crown of Thorns, and in many Religious Orders the outward symbol is used to intensify, if so it may be, the lesson; but for him who was destined always to suffer from his head, it had a peculiar significance; truly, however, could he have said:

> For sickness and for health, I am Thy own,
> I offer, yet not choose the sacrifice.

"Did you have any treat on the day of your vows?" he was asked.

"No," he replied, laughing; "but it *was* such a happy day."

"Which was the happiest," inquired his friend, "the day of your first vows, or that of your last vows?"

"Oh, that of my first vows by far," he replied.

"The last vows bound me more closely to the Society, but the first vows were my consecration to God."

. . . . . .

After the vows, Brother Augustus Dignam was sent to Stonyhurst to commence his studies, and he was soon hard at work. He writes to his sister describing the various courses of study which he would have to pass through, and adds: "All this before the theology! It seems long to you; but be sure the more studies I get, the better Jesuit I shall learn to be. Many do not get all, but those in general do most for God's glory who have had the full course. But, after all, once in the ship, as St. Aloysius used to say, what need of one more thought about ourselves? We have saints, and plenty of them, who never reached the priesthood at all."

His sister having asked him who was his favourite saint in the Society—he replies, "Venerable Berchmans" (who was not then beatified and was comparatively little known); "he is the best example of the most difficult of all virtues—to love to be unknown."

A great sorrow was now hanging over him. His mother's health was rapidly failing. The gentle, unselfish mother, to whom he owed so much, who had so carefully watched over him, was very dearly loved.

He writes: "Her letters seem to tell of increasing weakness. I can't be quite calm over it yet."

In the spring of 1859, Mrs. Dignam became

seriously ill. She suffered from chronic bronchitis, and each attack left her weaker than before. She earnestly wished to see her Jesuit son before she died, and, therefore, application was made to allow him to go to her.

The following letter tells the result:

"Stonyhurst, 29th May, 1859.

"My dearest Mother,—I was barely able to scratch a few lines by post time after receiving S. and A.'s letters, and I was so sorry for having caused you any uneasiness that I thought it better to write at once, than wait to see Father Provincial again. I think, dear, I told you what he would probably say—and in fact unless it be absolutely for the spiritual necessity of a parent that we should visit them, St. Ignatius would always rather that we make the mutual sacrifice for the love of Almighty God. I must own that, although I thought I was quite resigned, Father Johnson's decision made my heart ache a little, although it was most kind and gentle, and given, as I could feel, not without pain to himself. But now that we know so certainly the will of God, shall we not both find grace to bow to it with docility—yes, and feel sure that our meeting in Heaven will be the happier? Oh, my dear mother, if, as Annie seems to say, our Lord permitted you to have fears for my perseverance in my studies, and nevertheless strengthened you even in this to say *Fiat voluntas tua*, I have no fear He will be wanting to you now. The best way to put an end to such troubles is to try and tell you,

with all the simplicity I can muster, how very good our Lord and His Blessed Mother have been to me. I may truly say, if I pass over the gloomy feelings which came at times during my first retreat, and the first week or two of my noviceship, I have never even had the least temptation with regard to my vocation (and temptations you must remember are far more common things in Religion than out of it) and I always pray that, however I may be tempted, I may be preserved from this, and I feel great confidence I ever shall. Even now the old feeling comes back again continually after three years and more—'can it be real—am I indeed so happy?' and I assure you, dear, it is never without remembering that I owe it all to your prayers and Annie's. I don't mean to exclude dear little Margaret. I can speak of these things to you without fear, for they are *above* vanity. The greatest saint could never *deserve* a vocation, and certainly I, who spent all my life in giving pain to you and my dear father, am not going to think *I* have deserved even the least of the graces I enjoy. In the same way no one can deserve the grace of perseverance—and I assuredly least of all—but we know that our good God will never refuse it to those who ask it of Him, and there are so many to ask it for me. Let us hope that He who has begun the good work will carry it through to the end. But I have not done yet—as for the studies, which you and I, dear, used to think so ruefully about—forgetting, perhaps, that the *Sedes Sapientiæ*, the Mother of beautiful love, of fear, of knowledge, and of holy hope, was ready to help us at our call—

let me tell you a little word of Father Christie, who was my professor at the beginning of this year of studies—but who is now one of the Farm Street community.[1] He said to me one day, about the end of last November, 'How thankful you ought to be when you remember how backward you were when you came up here, not a year ago—and now see that you are one of the pillars of the class.' I believe that I tell you this with no other intention than that our dear Lady may be glorified and you consoled; and certainly God meant it for the consolation of your latter days when He called me to the Society, which so many saints and princes and cardinals have desired in vain to belong to. Father Whitty, whom I saw on Thursday, had to wait for ten years. I think if Father General himself were to suggest my departure, I should be inclined to answer as an old lay-brother did, who has been cook here and at Hodder for nearly forty years. Father Brownbill, when Master of Novices, came down to the kitchen one day, and said, without the least preface, 'Brother Coupe, go up to the Provincial, and get released from your vows, and be off. You're no use to me.' 'Noa,' said the old Lancashire man, who is, and ever was, a model of meekness and obedience, 'a woan't, Fayther Broonbill—theyer—a woan't!' So, if they want to send me away, dear, I'll come Brother Coupe to them. Now, dear mother, I hope you will thank God for me, and have great confidence—let me hear soon again from somebody, and I will write also before long.

[1] Father Christie, S.J., of beloved and revered memory.

"Please let this letter be confined to the home circle, and no more.

"Your loving son in the Sacred Heart,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

Augustus was in retreat when, on September 1st, the soul of his sweet and holy mother passed peacefully away. The poor father bore up bravely, and wrote to his eldest daughter that he was coming to see her at Bruges on the 9th.

Mr. Dignam was in worse health than was supposed, and the loss of her in whom his life was wrapped up had literally broken his heart.

The funeral took place on the 7th, and during the following night Sylvester, who slept in his father's room, was awakened by a low cry or moan; he called for assistance—priest and doctor were sent for, but in vain, for with that cry the soul had gone.

Then it was indeed, says one of the survivors, "the wheel of life went over us." The peaceful home was gone for ever. Yet, as Augustus wrote afterwards, sorrow was mingled with the joy of knowing that both these well-loved parents were gathered together safely into the bosom of their God, and those who had loved their children so truly on earth would now plead for them before the Eternal Throne.

Life flowed on tranquilly at Stonyhurst; the correspondence between Brother Dignam and his sister became more and more interior in its character. They compared each other's spiritual

reading and grew ever more united in their aims. He writes:

"A word now, however, to show that prayer is a simpler thing than we are apt to imagine. Towards the end of my noviceship a priest joined who had made a long theology at the Roman College, and had had the happiness of knowing Father Roothaan. One day we were talking about prayer, and he told me he had once been a witness of the Father General's prayer. He was waiting to see him, I think, and the Father General, who has a private chapel adjoining his room, was making his thanksgiving after Mass. For a whole hour, he said, he knelt there, and his whole word was 'Oh, *misericordia, misericordia.*' This man was, if it be lawful to say so, a saint, and one of the greatest masters of prayer amongst St. Ignatius's children.

. . . . . .

"I feel as if I should like very much to see you all again—nothing else will really set you to work to obtain my conversion. You don't know, dear, what terrible things happen. We have seen here before our eyes a young man who had been our brother—brother in the noviceship, brother in the schools, with the same graces, the same holy end in view—turn his back upon all this and go into the world again. And horrible as this is, history tells us there never was a period when from time to time such things were not. Thank God, more rarely here than elsewhere; but that there could happen one such a thing, is it not enough to make us tremble indeed?

. . . . . .

"About meditation, it needs but the remark that the *remote* preparation should be (Father Lallemant's two points) recollection and purity of heart, to explain that I am the most incapable one in the world to hope for help from. In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, if the mind doesn't work and the heart is all dry, I keep my eye on the tabernacle and say over and over again David's short but expressive words, 'Like a beast of burden before Thee;' or presently, perhaps, our Lord's words to His Apostles, so overwhelming in their suppressed tenderness, '*Noli timere, Ego sum*,' when He came to them across the water and they were afraid. No one, I believe, can ever fathom the love, the condescension of that short, affectionate assurance, 'It is I—*whom* you *know*.' Another word that will go far is St. Francis's, '*Deus meus et omnia*.' *Omnia*—Father, yes; brother, yes; spouse, ah yes, my all and for ever."

During part of the vacation the scholastics at Stonyhurst went to the sea-shore for rest and change of air.

Augustus writes: "You know our kind mother the Society sends her children off and spares nothing to give them abundant recreation, and I have been riding and rowing and sailing and bathing and fishing.

"On the evening of St. Ignatius' feast, as we were getting on board our boat, Father Weld, my Superior, said, laughing, 'I should like a good haul to-night; it would be emblematical.' We caught more than seventy pounds of fish that

evening, and I hope and pray we may some day be permitted to realize the parable when we are really made fishers of men."

Writing after his retreat, he says: "If you want to make your daily prayer for me *most* efficacious, to direct it to the very point where the greater glory of God is secured, ask for me the spirit of the Exercises, perfect knowledge of them—dexterity, when the time comes, in the use; but, above all, *love* of them, so that I may be penetrated through and through with their spirit in all its length, breadth, depth and height. If you do this, what souls you will save, what glory you will give to God! Better still if you pray that, in case it may not be so in my regard, still that some one soul amongst us may have and use the grace you ask in all its plenitude—one man more be given to the Society who is nothing else but a living copy of the Spiritual Exercises. You know it is not only Ours who venerate them. St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis of Sales, St. Alphonsus, only say in stronger language what they knew them to be; but to appreciate them fully is the privilege of the saints, and not even all of *them*. This has been my daily prayer, and I was wrong not to have enlisted yours before.

"I want you who were my Ananias, who bade me 'go to the Jesuits,' I want you to know and love well the spirit to which you introduced me. The Society, indeed, may owe you no thanks for it—I at least must and do. Can I not now, as truly as Père de Ravignan himself, bless God for having decided for ever my blessed lot?"

One great help towards sanctity he possessed, his constant fervent love of his vocation, which never left him during his whole life.

In one of his letters he says, speaking of a history of the Society which he had been reading: "It makes one's blood tingle over the glorious phases, and thank God they are numberless, of the history of the *Minima Societas*."

Like a convert who sees with awe and delight the wonderful beauties of the Catholic Church unfold themselves, so was he enchanted as he understood more of the majesty and beauty of his Order, with its galaxy of Saints, Blessed, Venerables, its martyrs and confessors, its men of science and letters, and the vast number of its masters in the spiritual life.

And this love for his Order never relaxed through life. In his last days a friend remarked to him: "O Father, I am so glad that you are a Jesuit." He clasped his hands, lifted his eyes to Heaven, exclaiming with deep emotion, "What, then, must *I* feel about it!" He was indeed every inch a Jesuit. Though with his largeness of views, he saw the beauty of other Orders, and admired their works and their spirit, his love for the Society was that of a devoted child. Everything in it—belonging to it—was perfect in his eyes, and his gratitude for his vocation permeated his whole life.

At one time he exhorts his sister not to confine her prayers to her own relatives and friends, as if their salvation depended upon that, and remarks that "an apostle who had gone off home and sat

down by the parlour fire to spend a year or two converting his uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters would have met with a warm reception from St. Peter or St. Paul or St. Ignatius when he returned home to report progress."

The trial which was to be lifelong with Augustus Dignam met him at Stonyhurst—constant ill-health. He suffered greatly from his teeth, from violent headaches and weakness of the spine, and these were sad companions for one who had to study hard and pass stiff examinations. He often felt the pressure of the Thorny Crown.

Those who have never suffered from continual and agonizing headaches, with the thorough prostration and inevitable depression they bring with them, make but little account of the malady.

> Perchance if it were some grand uncommon grief,
> The world would pity and its science cure;
> But this I know, I only find relief
> In thinking what my Saviour did endure.

Painful boils and abscesses also afflicted him from time to time. Once he was laid up for three weeks from this cause, just before the hardest examination of his course, but he went on with cheerful courage; and speaking of his prospects, says, "Our good Mother alone can bring me through; perhaps, indeed, so salutary a humiliation as failure would be a grace, but no, I must not think that."

He constantly speaks of the watchful care of his Superiors: they forbid him to fast, and take, he declares, only too much care of his health.

. . . . . .

After four years at Stonyhurst, Augustus was sent to St. Francis Xavier's College, Liverpool, to begin teaching. He writes: "I am master of the second school here. I have upwards of thirty very nice lads; they are all very docile and mostly very sharp. . . . I have before me the really dreadful task of providing theatrical entertainments for Christmas. Can you recommend me something funny in English or French?"

The scholastics at Liverpool were allowed to take a small share in the work of the Mission attached to the College, which also possesses a spacious and beautiful church. Augustus writes: "I have a Young Men's Debating Society to look after, and that, in addition to my small doings, taxes my weak resources not a little."

He took great pains with this society. He says: "Liberalism is so general and the Encyclical Letter of the Pope has turned a good many of these discussions in that direction; it was a great godsend to me, and some good may, I think, have been done."[1]

Then he had to give a weekly catechism to the poor from the workhouse after their Mass on Sundays, "who form for me a goodly congregation in a side-chapel; the men and women are holy old folks enough, but the children give me plenty to do, as they are sadly tampered with by Protestant schoolmistresses during the week."

But amidst all his various duties, the spiritual life was not forgotten.

"The principal difficulty, I need not say, is to

[1] These young men loved him, and gave him a set of Breviaries when he left Liverpool.

shut out distractions in spiritual duties, and to let myself lie in God's hands quietly. I need scarcely tell you I continue to like my work, and am very jolly indeed; but I sigh, when I have the grace to do so, to see the beginnings of an interior life so far away, but feel, at the same time, that the best thing is confidence.

"I pray very hard to St. Ignatius, and wish better folk would ask him for me to make me his true and docile child; it is too great a grace to be easily got, to be a true Jesuit."

. . . . . .

After a retreat he writes: "I realized for the first time something of what we so often read about the retreats of missioners. I mean that the solitude and recollection which they find a luxury after labour, I found so after dissipation. God is so good, and deepens, notwithstanding all infidelity, the unspeakable sense of joy in the vocation He has given me. I trust in you very much to get me the sense, the spirit, the instinct of the Exercises. Remember it is by them we must work. Our holy Father will not recognize as his anything not founded on them.

. . . . . .

"It was a great pleasure to me to see a good deal of Father Weld[1] while in London, and above all to get my retreat from him. His noviceship at Roehampton is a real paradise, and it is hard to be much with him without coming to the conclusion that it is a very enviable thing to be a saint,

[1] Father Alfred Weld, S.J., of revered memory, died at the Zambesi Mission some years ago.

for I verily believe he is one, or at the very least, soon will be. But going so rapidly from retreat into such a bustling life, I am like to be a perfect example of the good seed which fell upon sandy ground. He lent me the *Apostolat*, and I read the opening chapters with the greatest interest; they are a noble specimen of philosophy well applied, and give us, I think, the most valuable lessons we can learn on the value and price of prayer. I think also I am giving you in this letter, scratched at many intervals, a sufficient idea of my own want of prayers to induce you to set the *Apostolat* to work vigorously in my direction."

His sister naturally longed to see him a priest, and this indeed was the ardent yearning of his own soul; but before all, he loved and trusted in the will of God.

He writes: "As for the future we shall not be anxious. We have come into Religion not to do this or that, not even to indulge the yearning for the priesthood itself, but to do God's will. Nay, the delay itself affords us this source of thanksgiving, that it is an argument that we are useful to the Society. Oh, if it should give us this still greater cause of gratitude that we may be the holier priests in God's own time. In any case let us remember Berchmans' maxim, 'All uneasiness is from the devil.'"

Bad health still followed him at Liverpool, and he laments that he has been obliged to receive a "positive veto on all sitting up o' nights, which has robbed me of many an hour of which I used once to avail myself."

CHAPTER II.

PRIESTHOOD.

"Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech. . . . That he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins."

AT the end of three years' teaching, Augustus Dignam was sent to the beautiful College of St. Beuno's, in North Wales, overlooking the Vale of Clwyd, where the theological studies in preparation for the priesthood are made. Soon after his arrival he writes to his sister:

"You must redouble your prayers to make a good priest for the Society and for the Church, to make one fit to say *Introibo!* Of course every increase, however little, in the sanctity of a priest multiplies glory to God in every Mass he says, in every confession he hears, every Office he recites, every sacrament he administers, every sermon he preaches. You have but a short time, dear, to do a great deal. I am anxious, of course, to make every moment a stepping-stone, but somehow the stones are loose, and after a great scramble I am always finding myself puffing for breath, and pretty much where I was before. But, perhaps, you will not understand that while I was still in the turmoil

of the school, it seemed that if *only* I was here, all must be right directly, and recollection come of itself, but *imaginatio locorum*, A'Kempis tells us, has deceived others besides me, and it behoves us to come quietly back to the old story we started with—patience and courage. Father Eyre is at present my especial consolation, being not only my professor of dogma, but Spiritual Father also, and as we can by no means make sure of him for more than this year, I am doing my little best to get two years into one. I am not very strong for study—the old friends, the teeth, eminently zealous and effective in the capacity of purgatorial agents. All such small privileges, however, are lost in the one great all-compassing joy of being here at last in the solemn, solemn feeling of the coming priesthood, which draws many a great act of hope out of my poor frightened soul. You know that one of our Fathers saw that his Angel Guardian changed his place after ordination, and instead of going before him, *walked behind*—that's rather an awful idea, I think."

One of his cousins, at Bruges, was dying about this time.

"This illness of dear G., who, you know, entered Religion about the same time as myself, has, it seems to me, put in a new light how unspeakably great this blessing is we then received; and how different a lot is awaiting her in Heaven, if it please our Blessed Lord to call her away from you now, than if those ten years had been spent amid the solicitudes, even of any worldly life. Yes, certainly,

whether she is spared or taken away, she has our Lord's own word: 'Rejoice and be glad in that day.'"

Augustus was always contented wherever he went, and, as usual, found everything pleasant in his new abode. Father William Cardwell was Rector, and Augustus tells his sister, "he is an immense addition to us both as Superior and professor, and between him and Father Eyre, there is but little merit in being happy here. There is so great a pressure for men at the moment, that I dare not lay too much stress on the Provincial's half-promise of another year for me here, though I by no means give up hope."

Then he tells her about his professors: one was "an ocean of erudition," another of "vivacious eloquence." His studies were interrupted by a serious illness.

"It was about the middle of November that I was laid up with another abscess—this time in my back. There was nothing very dreadful about it, indeed the rest was most agreeable to my head, but the troublesome part was the great weakness it has caused, now quite gone, I hope. However, they make much of it; indeed, the kindness and solicitude spent on me has more than once fairly overcome me, for I—good Heaven! what can I ever do to justify it all?"

Fasting and penance were forbidden, and he says:

"Obedience always has its consolation, and one may ask for grace in humble trust, since self-will is

not concerned; but interior mortification is not made easier by leaving off what is external, while it becomes more necessary than ever. And this year—these months before the priesthood—shall I not look back on them all my life and wish I had them over again to make a better use of—*Non me vincat, Domine, non me vincat caro et sanguis!* If God please (and my heart beats while I say so) the fourth Sunday of September, on which we celebrate the Seven Dolours, will see me ordained priest. What, dear Annie, shall we say to one another then, and whose name must be first in my heart and on my lips when I ascend the altar? Father Balthazar Alvarez—the greatest, perhaps, of our uncanonized—when he was quite an old priest, went once ten miles out of his way to thank once more the man whose counsel had decided his vocation. And you—not only your counsel decided but your prayers obtained."

He then speaks of Father Augustus Law, to whom he was deeply attached—"A very dear friend of mine has gone to Berbice at a day's notice. He converted a passenger on the way out who was seized with yellow fever and died. He is a true saint, and there are no limits to his devotedness."

Before Augustus again wrote to his sister the greatest event in his life (or, indeed, in the life of any man) had taken place. He was ordained priest. And now and henceforth we can gladly call him by the name which was soon to become beloved by many hearts—Father Dignam. He was ordained on September 22nd, on which day fell the feast of

our Lady's Seven Dolours, so that his promotion to the priesthood took place under the very eye, as it were, of that Mother of Dolours to whom he was so devoted.

Five other Jesuits were ordained with him: Fathers Alexander Charnley, Walter Bridge, James Splaine, Thomas Ellis, and Thomas Kay.

Father Dignam's first letter after his ordination was addressed to the Mother Prioress of the convent at Bruges:

"St. Beuno's College, St. Asaph,
"September 23rd, 1867.

"MY VERY DEAR REV. MOTHER,—From the beginning, as often as I have received any greater graces from God, they have been ever quickly followed by the thought that now the good prayers at Bruges have been heard. How impressively, then, this made itself felt in my soul yesterday you will not, I think, be at a loss to imagine. As I rose from my knees, with the pressure of the Bishop's hands still warm upon my head, his lips upon my cheek—and I knew that in all my helplessness I was a priest—a priest—the old familiar thought was there—the good prayers at Bruges have been heard. But now I must not stop even to thank you. This morning I said my first Mass. I thought, as I am sure you will think too, that my first duty was to that Mother *to whom you gave me*—'the most dear and good Mother, the Society of Jesus,' as Blessed Berchmans so justly and so beautifully calls her. That the Society which has borne with me so long,

nourished me so lovingly, and to-day crowned her goodness and my happiness, may become dearer still to the Sacred Heart—an instrument still more fitting to the greater glory of God. But, dear Rev. Mother, that first duty of filial love fulfilled, my Mass to-morrow is, oh most assuredly, for that community which I cannot think of without my heart rising to God to beg His blessings on them—to-morrow's Mass is a first instalment for His choicest graces on you and your whole community.

"Ever gratefully yours in the Sacred Heart,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J., *Sac.*"

(TO HIS SISTER.)

"St. Beuno's College, St. Asaph,

"September 26th, 1867.

"MY DEAREST SISTER, P.X.,—To try and thank you in words for all that your letter conveyed to me would, I fear, be only to lose time; as you say, excellently, we must, for want of a new language, settle these things principally with the Sacred Heart Itself. I knew well, of course, that you would be praying hard for me, and was sure that I should have much charity from your Sisters. Now I can repay, for now I have power—yes, my God, it is true, for Thou hast given it—power over the Heart of Jesus Christ. Will one ever be able to think of it without trembling? I said Mass for you, of course, yesterday, for I thought that you deserved from me the first-fruits, as far as I could give them, of the priestly blessing. You have nursed me a long time, and it is but justice, that now I am able

to work, I should do something at least towards supporting you. Nor do I think that anything will ever displace you and yours from the first place in my memento. On Monday I say Mass for those two dear ones whose joy would have been so ineffable had they lived for it, yet is assuredly far greater now. The retreat was not equal to Father Gallwey's, but *he* is a true giant; but it was not like ordinary retreats—one cared very little what was said when head and heart were all full of one idea—the priesthood was upon me at last! Friday, the last day of retreat, we were ordained sub-deacons. I had begun saying Office with the retreat, so as to be familiar with it by the time it became obligatory—and very full of interest and consolation I have found it to be. On the Saturday we got the Diaconate. I was very tired and in some pain. I suffered a good deal all night; but, thanks to our Lady and my dear Angel Guardian, grace and excitement together carried me through capitally—it is a positive consolation to have some little thing to suffer amid so much joy. During the Ordinations themselves, I failed signally to realize to myself what was taking place, until I saw the Bishop place his hand on the head of the first (I was the last of the six) and heard the *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*, and then a thrill went through me that I shall not forget; but I was quite quiet again when my turn came. For an instant also, when my hands were anointed, I had a very deep feeling of awe and gratitude, but for the most part I had far less sensible devotion than at ordinary times. As soon

as we returned to the sacristy the people made a rush to kiss our hands, and it went on seemingly *in perpetuum ;* I am convinced some of them must have come ten times over. Whenever I did find myself alone for a moment the strange dialogue began directly. "Why, you're a priest!—a priest?—yes, it is true indeed. Well, I don't feel like one!—no matter—a priest for all the rest of your life—for ever!" And then I seemed to run to our Blessed Lady like a frightened child. I was very lucky with my first Mass. Father Eyre was good enough to assist me. There is one of the divines here so truly a saint that I can find nothing in Berchmans' life which I do not find in his. I say this not figuratively, but in plainest fact. He joined the Noviceship a very few months after me, and in many years of community life I have never seen him deliberately yield to nature. Naturally, I was anxious to have him to serve me, but I had a difficulty about asking him; judge then my joy when he came to ask me. So you see I started life in the best of company, and, with the exception of a little want of fluency, aided by my short-sightedness, I got through well enough. One of our *Ordinati* of last year, had at his first Mass a sensible feeling of the presence of our Lord after he had pronounced the words of Consecration; I was not so favoured. It is time now to bring my long chatter to an end.

"Ever yours, in the Divine Heart,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J., *neo Sacerdos.*"

Father Dignam remained for a few weeks at the College, and had charge of the little Mission at St. Asaph, at that time served thence. During Father Dignam's stay at St. Beuno's, this charge belonged for a time to Father M'Swiney, whose utter self-forgetfulness in the service of the poor made an indelible impression on the young student. He used to recite anecdotes of this afterwards, speaking, as he always did, with peculiar affection of that Father. He left St. Beuno's with great regret, and often spoke of the happy days he had passed under the College roof.

He did not go to St. Asaph with any great self-confidence, for he speaks gratefully of the help given to him by Mrs. Ainsworth, a convert lady and benefactress of the mission. He says, "How much good she enabled me to do, or rather did by me. How often her counsel helped me through difficulties I could not see my way out of!"

In February, 1868, he was sent to Worcester, where his old friend, Father Waterworth, was Superior, and he preached his first sermon in the pulpit of a public church on February 9th.

"Is it not a strange chance," he writes, "that sends me back to dear old Father Waterworth, to make my second start with him who, twelve years ago, sped me on to Beaumont, to make my first?

"So the 9th of February was my *debût* in the noviceship and in the pulpit, and so ends my tutelage, and I must face the fact that I am a child no longer. Time enough you will say at five-and-

thirty; but I feel the change none the less for all that.

"Your two pictures *gave me the horrors;* pray get them back and burn them; I will say two Masses if you do."

The pictures were photographs of himself. He never would afterwards allow his photograph to be taken.

He had plenty to do at Worcester, and from thence went once to take part in one of the great Missions given by a band of Fathers.

He writes: "I want your prayers more and more, for I realize painfully and often St. Paul's thought, 'lest after I have preached to others.' Prayer becomes so much more difficult and yet more urgently necessary, and dangers are plenty enough."

Ill-health pursued him at times. Father Waterworth was absent for a short holiday, and had promised to visit the nuns at Bruges.

"I am sure you will be delighted with him. But take care not to talk as if I were a martyr to work, or exhibit any extravagant solicitude about my health, for he is himself too anxious about it, and would be very sensitive if any little expression fell from you that could be construed into a doubt of his fatherly care of me. Besides I am now perfectly well."

In the summer of 1869, Father Dignam was sent to Boulogne-sur-Mer, as the French Jesuits there required the help of an English Father.

Before settling at Boulogne Father Dignam was

allowed to pay a short visit to his sister at Bruges. It was eighteen years since they had met, and for the greater part of those years he had been a Jesuit. Her reverence for him had been gradually growing, and from this time the tie of spiritual father and child was added to the tender one of brother and sister. This very rarely happens. It is seldom that a spiritual relation is built upon a natural one, and when these exceptions do occur it surely speaks much for the sanctity of the priest and the simplicity of the penitent. It has been necessary to say these few words, as, of course, the correspondence began to change its character after this visit.

Father Dignam used his fraternal relation only to exact more from this spiritual child than from any other. He believed her to be called to high perfection, and he strove with all his might to lead her to correspond with grace, feeling entirely at his ease with her, knowing that her confidence in his affection would always remain unshaken. He once said to a penitent, meaning it for a high compliment: "I am almost as severe with you as I have been with my sister."

After he was settled at Boulogne he wrote to her: "I must not attempt now, my own dear sister, to answer your letter. Enough to say, that the more I reflect on our meeting the more I feel as you do, and thank our Lord for His great goodness to us. And right wise and practical is your reflection that if these things give us such joy here, they teach us what, or at least something of what, it will

be to see His Face, if He smile upon us, as we hope He will, in Heaven. You know St. Ignatius' last contemplation on the love of God, and how he says that all the goodness and beauty which we find in creatures are but rays from the sun—spray from the exhaustless fountain—and if they can give us joy, what will that joy be in its source? How happy for us if all this make us love God more. I get stronger every day, and nothing could well exceed the kindness and consideration I experience here. I am ordered off to give the students' retreat at Douai. It will be from the 4th to the 8th of next month. Next week I go to make the acquaintance of the Sisters of Charity, who have the key of the poor population, and of the Little Sisters also. There is a little school to be catechized, I am glad to find out."

In January, 1871, Father Dignam had a very serious illness, and could not say Mass "for six sad days." Long rest and care were prescribed, and he was sent to Bruges, where he resided in the Chaplain's quarters at the English Convent for six weeks, and even then was too weak to travel back to Boulogne alone. This long stay was a great comfort to his sister. She had leisure now to understand his inner self more thoroughly, to make her own spiritual trials and difficulties fully known to him, and thus henceforth became able to rely entirely on his judgment. His parting words to her were: "Best loved, most trusted, in whom I rest, may the union which is our joy now grow till it is perfected in Heaven Eternal; no need of more. Adieu in the Sacred Heart."

After his return to Boulogne he wrote:

"May our Lord bless you as I do now. You and all the dear souls, too, who have been so kind to me. The memory of that visit and all the sweet atmosphere of happiness and compassion and tenderness, and a thousand beautiful things besides, remains like a halo round me when I pray, and makes my faith and hope and charity glow as they never used to."

A course of Lent sermons was given, and he writes: "A good many Protestants attended regularly, and we may hope some conversions may happen."

A lady who was living at Boulogne at the time writes thus of Father Dignam: "He was a most devoted priest, ready at all times to see those who sought his advice and help. He had that gift of being all in all to the person he was with at the time.

"I remember his sermons were most impressive, and it was a most edifying sight to see him at the altar."

(To his Sister.)

"I like well enough what you say about yourself, and without doubt our Lord will lead you step by step to something ever more solid—self-conquest and that union with Him which is attainable only by and in proportion to it. But take care, my dear—often after these lights comes discouragement when we fail to *see* the fruit—times when we need Père de Ravignan's old word, '*Allez toujours*.' Ours

to pray, God to give fruition. Pray for me. I can feel the fruit of your prayers, and only these prayers can keep me from being a fool. There is an awful need of prudence.

. . . . . .

"To prepare meditation; ten minutes spent thus at night are amongst the most valuable of the whole day. It is a great misfortune not to have all settled beforehand: the source whence I am to get my points, and, far better, to take a book which is too diffuse and *trim* it for yourself, than to go groping about in the Scriptures at random for something to strike you."

A rumour came into Boulogne that a saint had been discovered in an adjoining village; that she had visions, and was in direct communication with Heaven. So a party of devout persons, among whom was Father Dignam, set out to see her.

They found her in a reclining posture, and by her side was a priest, who said the "Voyante" was in a trance.

Presently, Father Dignam said to one of the party:

"I think I never saw a plainer face."

As he spoke he saw the eyelids lifted a little, and a look of malignity darted from the eyes, which quite startled him.

Presently the "Voyante" spoke to her confessor. Father Dignam asked what she had said. "She says," he replied, "that there is an evil influence in this room. She wishes you all to go away."

So they withdrew, the Father being favoured with another malignant look ere he left the room.

Little more was heard of the "Voyante," who, fortunately, was soon detected in her imposture.

Father Dignam did a great deal of good while there, and received many Protestants into the Church. He was much interested in a family, who were very High Church, and especially in two of the daughters, one married, the other unmarried. They often came to St. Francis de Sales' Church and heard him preach and made his acquaintance. Miss H. had a fever while at Boulogne, and after her recovery told him she had seen our Lord in a dream looking at her and pointing to His Sacred Heart. After they had left, the married sister was received into the Church, with her husband and children, and then was not allowed to see her sister any more.

Five years passed away, and Miss H. was induced by a Catholic friend to witness the confirmation of one of her nieces in a convent chapel on the feast of the Sacred Heart. By accident, Father Dignam was there, and had a long conversation with her, the result of which was that she was received into the Church during the octave.

Both she and her Catholic friend had to suffer a great deal on account of this, each being turned out of house and home in consequence.

Father Dignam wrote to them, quoting the words: "*And they indeed went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.*"

This convert, to whom our Lord had, as she thought, shown His Sacred Heart, became a nun of an Order dedicated to that Divine Heart.

A servant girl, when talking to a nun, spoke of difficulties and dangers to which she had been exposed at Boulogne, from all of which she escaped through the unfailing kindness and care of a priest. When asked his name, she said: "His name was Father Dignam, but in my prayers I always call him my good angel."

In the August of 1871, Father Dignam was called to England, and was uncertain whether his Provincial intended him to return to Boulogne. He wrote to his sister from Bristol:

"I am not to return. People over here find me looking very thin and worn out, and with the Tertianship before me, I am to be allowed to do very little for the present. I came down here yesterday and had such a warm reception! I have terrible orders about not doing any fatiguing work, and, I suppose, the principal thing will be preaching *and nursing*."

His sister thought that he much regretted his departure from Boulogne, and he replied:

"Let me begin by putting you at ease as regards myself. I have never had a regret about leaving Boulogne, nor any temptation on the subject; even as regards individual penitents, I do not think there is one who will lose by my absence, unless, possibly, a convert whom I received about six weeks before leaving, under pressure and with very little instruc-

tion, but as she is a poor little drudge, who could only come and see me for half an hour once a fortnight, who cannot read, and who is particularly simple and honest, whom finally I gave over to little F. the last time she came to me, I cannot say that even she gives me any anxiety. Well, but if so, why so down? My dear, when you are suddenly removed from office, some day you will, in a small way, recognize the feeling. You may be very glad of the leisure, yet for all that, nature, in some queer, indefinable way, sulks over the change—even if the sulks be purely physical, they are still positive. Nature, when she has got into bad habits, does not relish having no excuse for negligence over spiritual duties, is rather fretted at not being wanted, and feeling rather on a level with the cat. This is, I fancy, the real explanation of what you discover in my letter, though I can't say I feel anything more than the inevitable relaxation after too long a strain. If I were to run about the Province a little, I should soon get up my pluck, I dare say, but I hope that I am not so miserable as to be unable to use a week or two's quiet without crying for distraction.

"You, poor child, have had sadness. Well, never be sad at that, sadness is no bad thing. When well fought (and I am thoroughly pleased with your pluck) there is nothing which purifies the soul like it after much esteem, affection, and confidence from others. It brings us face to face with our own motives, too, and purifies and strengthens them in a way that gives great courage afterwards.

Above all it forces us on to our knees—on to our faces, and teaches us better and better how vain all is without Him. So now let me be the Angel, and you, Daniel, 'Fear not, peace be to thee, take courage and be strong.'"

. . . . . .

"God has blessed you with the best answer to your desires to please Him perfectly. You will have all my Mass on Sunday, and you know that no day passes without my poor little word being put into the chalice for you and all those round you."

. . . . . .

"For the present your *Summa* of ascetical theology should be mortifying repugnances, inclinations, zeal, anticipations, joys and sorrows into one great permanent act of joy in God's will, as much as ever you can, deepening the INTELLECTUAL conviction of your own incapacity and rejoicing in it, since God can only then be all when we are nothing."

And now a very important time in his life had come for Father Dignam; he was about to enter on his Tertianship, and to make for the second time in his life the Thirty Days' Retreat.

He had often complained, as we have seen in his letters, of the dryness which the distractions of hard study and teaching and work for souls almost inevitably bring with them. St. Ignatius so well knew this that he ordained the Tertianship as a time of spiritual refreshment and strengthening, standing midway, as it were, between the early and

later trials of a Jesuit's life. It is like the coping-stone of the spiritual edifice, from henceforth to be proof against all the storms.

We catch a glimpse of the dispositions with which Father Dignam was about to enter on this last probation in a letter to his sister.

"We must not be afraid, dear child, to think that we have more to learn than we know yet. God knows, I wish I were in someone's hands as you are in mine; and I am, I fear, not more in want of the man without than of the virtue within. Not onwards, then, but inwards let us go together. I am crushed at what I see in myself, and I look up to God, wondering when I think of this retreat and the work to be done in it as an ant might if ordered to move Alps. Does not St. John say in the Apocalypse to a priest: 'Thou art miserable and poor and blind and naked'?

. . . . . .

"St. Bernard used to say, *Quanto carior, tanto vilior*—'The viler the dearer.' If one could but coax our Lord to echo it. . . . Prayer should be reasonable; if you ask to be as like our Lord as I am, you talk worse than nonsense."

Father Dignam went to Manresa House, Roehampton, for his Tertianship towards the end of November, beginning with the long retreat, which ended on Christmas Day. Two days afterwards he wrote to his sister:

"I am, thanks to God, as well as you could wish—pulled down, perhaps, a little, but no whit worse than when I went in. It has been a time

indeed of blessing, but I don't know when I shall have time to tell you anything about it. Father Gallwey has been everything; his style proved in the end the thing of all things useful—the bark in the port wine. I was tremendously punished for good fifteen days, and learnt in bitter truth that I had never known what confidence in our Lord meant. That was the whole song—*modicæ fidei*. I have learnt a lesson, and please God I will practise it, and make others do so too. It was a useful humiliation and a bitter one, for perhaps you had succeeded in making me flatter myself that I did that part of it really well; but be sure, our Lord is jealous and quick to see flaws in our trust, and He can't stand them.

"I am glad you like Father Morris. He is one of whom St. Ignatius says, 'The brave get in one hour to what sluggards can't reach after years of work.' . . . You would do well to recognize that one of the first and most obvious things you gave to God when you entered Religion was *seeing me*, and that the prospect of an interview is no more one to set one's heart upon than any other. Take this in. . . . The victim idea is good. I have had great graces, and they are won for me thus. Little M.Z. is in torments now, which rend my heart to see; but these things are the gifts which the saints give the world."

In another letter he says: "I want to abuse you for some stuff in one of your letters—pious resignation under a cross, said cross being that somebody had seen me and not you. My dear, if we make inordinate expectations into crosses we

shall soon have a grand harvest of straw. If God sends us a *bonne bouche* like two spoilt babies for once, let us at least show a better appreciation of it than by crying for the moon. You are looking for the hundredfold and so am I."

When the Tertianship was over, Father Dignam was sent to Bournemouth to be Superior of the mission there. The Jesuit Fathers had not been long at Bournemouth when Father Dignam went there. The house and chapel were temporary, and a residence and church were in course of building. The house was intended chiefly as a sanatorium for invalid Fathers. The completion of these buildings fell into Father Dignam's hands, entailing of course great care, fatigue, and responsibility, together with the supervision of the mission, which was daily growing in importance as the town of Bournemouth enlarged its limits. There rose up during Father Dignam's stay a commodious house and lovely and most devotional church, very unique in its style, called the Oratory of the Sacred Heart. The completion of this church gave him indeed intense joy. At Bournemouth he did a great deal of good in spiritual direction and preaching, and also received many Protestants into the Church. He writes from thence that he found no books when he went there, and "could not get on—now I have got a good beginning of a library. Dear old Father Waterworth promises me another hundred volumes next week. He is so loving. We are full of people, though it is not what we call the season; but we have a sensational congregation, full of titles

and personages of every sort, with a constant sprinkling of Farm Street notables to keep us up to the last new thing. The little temporary chapel is so devout that everybody gets fond of it soon, and we are nearly half full every morning now at Mass. On the Assumption my altar was so pretty and I had such a lot of Communions that I was quite in an ecstasy. I wish my poor dear old *confrère* would get better."

"January, 1873.

"I have been wanting so to write these last few days. The good news has come, and I am to take my last vows on the 2nd. Enough said, for I have no time to say more, and if I had, I never could say it all; it will be only when I can shut myself up that I shall be able to realize it, and thank our Lord for all He is to send. I hope to get to St. Beuno's — at least, since Father Provincial writes to ask *where* I wish to go, I say there, for Father Weld's sake and all the houseful there who have been growing with me. I am too full of happiness to be able yet to know what it is all about. Get prayers for me."

"St. Beuno's College, St. Asaph,

"January 24th, 1873.

"I arrived here last night very tired out—but such a kind and affectionate reception. We began to-night (for Father Weld is going into retreat at the same time), and I shall not leave till the morning of the 3rd. Such a relief as it is to get

here—quite out of reach of a woman's voice, and to feel that a week's silence is before me—I feel quite frisky. Above all *get the prayers*. Alleluia—Alleluia. God bless you, dearest. Give God thanks for me."

"February 24th, 1873.

"You don't know what a time I have had since my return. I grieve to have forgotten you, dearest of all; but I need not tell you where the joy and thanksgiving for perfect sympathy intensified itself beyond all the rest. It is a cross to leave so much unanswered that my heart would like to talk of. How I thank God for such unvarying faith and affection. Give thanks to each one—not a word is overlooked. If I forget you, dear, it is because at the altar I *never* do. Your place is always first, all the dearly loved souls round you always being in your company. Help me through Lent. I shall need all *your* love can give to inspire and strengthen me. The Sacred Heart's best blessing enrich your mind and heart, memory and will, with light to know and grace to do and bear."

Father Dignam's health being again very unsatisfactory, his Provincial allowed him to go with a friend for a short journey to Belgium and Germany, beginning with a brief visit to Bruges in June.

His sister found the visit too brief, and hoped he would be able to return to England *via* Bruges; but he wrote to her from Coblentz:

"You must not, my own child, want to see me

again, now. You must not be sad because you cannot. Our Lord will be afraid to spoil you any more if you are not good about it. He knows you have had all that is good for you. May I not trust you? . . . We drove from Treves down the banks of the Moselle, and it was really one of the fairy hours of life. I continue to gain in power wonderfully. . . . I am saying Mass in the old churches of the Society wherever I find them, and asking our dear Lord to bless the true, simple Catholic people who throng them everywhere in this land of unspoilt faith. We drove through village after village with their Corpus Christi decorations all still standing, and the roads still strewed with the leaves they had cast before our Lord; pray God, Bismarck may not be able to injure so rare a sight, more grand even than the scenes it dwells among.

"P.S. At point of starting I have just received yours; look upon all wish to see me as a temptation. Be quite firm and solid about it; nor is it often useful to ask why God acts in one way when to our poor reason it seems He should have been quicker about it. Trust and rest. I must own the latter part of your letter of this morning consoles me and says just what I want you to. God bless you."

A charming description is given by Father Dignam of his visit to Nonnenwerth, the pretty islet that lies in the Rhine under the shadow of the Drachenfels. He and his friend rowed over, expecting only to find the picturesque ruins of the ancient convent which gave its name to the island

"and behold, the ruin was a house; by the house a lovely chapel; in the chapel a nun; then more nuns; lastly a heap of happy children—in fact a very flourishing *pensionnat*. Well, but may I not say Mass here to-morrow? Another is sent for, who looks shyly at me and says, 'I speak little English, ver little English.' So I made her trot me round and show me everything. By-and-by, '*Ze* poor Shesuits! sent away all;[1] we ver fond of Shesuits.' I shook my head very reprovingly. 'Ah,' I said, 'retreats, I suppose.' 'Oh, yes, ver nice retreats! ver nice Shesuits.' Just then we came to a window looking out on the lawn, with a statue of St. Aloysius in the middle. '*We* also danger,' she said. 'Yes, if the Prussians come and find *two* Jesuits here!' 'Two Shesuits?' she said, puzzled; 'ach—ah, yes. St. Aloys was a Shesuit—two Shesuit? no, great Shesuit.' She looked so very gentle in her perplexity, but the *denouement* never came, for a girl passed whom I found to be an American Protestant, and she presently brought *three* more, ranging from eight to eighteen; I found they were piously disposed and bright, sensible little things, but Methodists! and the stupid nuns had not insisted on their going to church. They told me so gleefully. I told them they were little geese for their pains. They were so astonished that I laughed at them. 'Wall,' the eldest said, 'I reckon you're a Catholic gentleman yourself.' 'You reckon right,' I said, 'and what do you think

[1] The Kulturkampf had begun, and the Jesuits had been expelled from Germany.

Almighty God sent you here for?' 'Wall,' said she, meditatively, 'to learn German, it might be.' (If I could give you the twang!) 'The sillier you to chatter together like magpies instead of joining the others.' 'Yes,' she said, 'you speak plain, *you* do.' Then I began to ask her about her own religion, and she reckoned it was all the same. She laughed when I told her this was very bad arithmetic, and after I had hinted that there were a few things called Sacraments, I got them all to promise to pray every day that they might 'get the grace for which God sent them there.' Afterwards I spoke of our Lady, but she told me stoutly: 'I pray to one person, and that's enough, *I* calculate.' 'Well, but the Trinity,' I said; 'which of the Three Persons do you choose out to pray to?' But she was ready. 'I guess you know what I mean, and none of them is a lady.' 'True, my child,' and she looked up curiously at me, 'but one of them is a *man*—not only was, but is a man. *N'est ce pas?*' 'It is so, and I reckon you talk French.' 'Never mind the French,' I said, 'but if you want something of a man and don't deserve it' (she nodded emphatically), 'perhaps it would not be a bad thing to get his mother to help you.' 'And that's it, is it?' 'That's it; and now be good girls and be off,' and so we parted, and the next day I said the Mass of the Sacred Heart for the Rev. Mother in their sweet little church at Rolandseck. And now, lest my letter should be nothing but gossip pure, let me answer your question about what you call 'the new light.' It is not that I think

great confidence demands extraordinary knowledge of ourselves, but that it is apt to give way under pressure, unless it be associated with habitual use of what we know. Confidence which forgets the past and is not ashamed of itself, is not solid; solid confidence is in abiding sorrow, and never comes into our Lord's Presence without putting itself into its proper place—there, I mean, whence God's pure bounty and not herself has lifted her to where she is. If we live (not anxiously, of course, but grieving for God's sake) in the memory of our own sin, God cannot resist inviting us 'go up higher,' and our trust is impregnable when, and only when, it is hand in hand with sedulous contrition. We ought not to be able to say *En ego* without a blush at our own impudence, and if the blush comes (or the feeling I mean by it) our trust *cannot* be too large for the Sacred Heart we trust in. If I am not clear, tell me."

Wherever Father Dignam had been placed since his ordination, he became a great favourite with many—but not with all.

He wrote to one of his penitents: "I beg of you to keep in mind the truth—the times when we are scolded, disgraced, humbled, are never times to grieve for; it is the harvest." When some people complained to him of similar trials that beset their path, he answered: "Well, how else shall we gain the eighth beatitude?"

"Oh!" his friends replied, "we thought that was only for saints and martyrs."

"Certainly not," he answered, "by bearing injustice patiently we can all gain it."

He may have misconceived others and been himself misunderstood in part, sometimes through his own fault. He was not perfect all at once—not a "ready-made saint," as people say, but a man aiming at high perfection, and struggling hard to attain it.

At this period of his life Father Dignam was inexperienced, and his zeal often outran his prudence. And it is singular that a man naturally so courteous and attractive could be at times most repelling.

Two persons who suffered from this sort of repulsion, afterwards found in him a faithful guide.

Probably he did not always put in practice the wise advice he once gave to his sister: "The great danger of people in office is the temptation to let their interest be captivated by details, which are often more interesting than the work of more general supervision. It is, as a general rule, far better to let things be less well done by subordinates than to occupy (no matter with how much individual benefit) the attention of those in more general authority. Generally speaking, we never help others much unless we are, *at least*, willing that somebody else should help them instead of us."

It must have been very hard for Father Dignam to conform to this. One of his defects from a child had been over-particularity; and it would have been exceedingly hard for him to see "things less well done by subordinates" rather than over-task himself by having them well done. He always wished to

have everything of the best, and as perfect as possible, and carried this desire often too far. He was over-anxious, and he told a friend in later years that life at Bournemouth wore him out. It could always be said of him that all his faults were on the surface—underneath was the strong, vigorous inner life. He learnt by every failure; he was never discouraged, but went cheerfully on. The great lesson that he had learnt in his second long retreat had been unshaken confidence in God. It became part of his soul, so that he might almost have been dubbed as Père Olivant was—who was even so addressed by letter—*Le Père de courage et de confiance;* and hence his invariable practice of "getting up again after a fall quickly, and getting good out of our faults."

Father Dignam had, then, his faults and failings, so had the saints; he made blunders and mistakes, so did they; and it was with him as it was with them:

> Finding, following, keeping, struggling,
> Is He sure to bless?
> Angels, Martyrs, Prophets, Virgins
> Answer, Yes!

He used to quote Father Etheridge's words: "It is never lost time to burn one's fingers."

Writing to his sister, he says: "Never forget folly is normal to us all, and that to find ourselves out must never discourage or frighten us, but, on the contrary, be a matter of thanksgiving. If I were to tell you of *my* fingers—poor scorched digits! —but I stick myself on my little pedestal and preach

away, knowing all the time, 'Physician, cure thyself!' is being uttered in Heaven. Often after preaching, I can't look the Tabernacle door in the face; I feel such a hypocrite."

There was also in Father Dignam a sort of apparent self-complacency which, however, sprang in reality from his humility. He looked on himself as inferior to the rest of his brethren on account of his weak health and incapacity for some important charges. He said once: "I am so useless, Superiors are perplexed what to do with me."

Therefore, when he found he was succeeding in an office, and giving satisfaction to his Superiors, for whose approbation alone he really cared, he was, as it were, bubbling over with childlike exultation; but only those who really knew him could discern this. His preaching was much admired at Bournemouth; and a person who was staying there says: "We so enjoyed that month of May (1873). He used to give short sermons every day; never longer than fifteen minutes. They were simply perfect."

In September, 1873, the great English pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial took place, this year being the bi-centenary of our Lord's first apparition to the Blessed Margaret Mary, and Father Dignam was allowed to join the group of Jesuit Fathers who went. We can well understand with what feelings this lover of the Sacred Heart would kneel at the chief shrine of the devotion, and pray on the very spot where our Lord appeared.

There was, of course, a great crowd of priests

of all nationalities, and all wished to say Mass at the altar of the apparition. They surrounded the unfortunate sacristan, who was perfectly bewildered.

"M. le Sacristan," one priest was exclaiming, in a very loud voice, "c'est mon *droit*." Meanwhile Father Dignam had quietly vested, and being ready, of course went out first, and said Mass in the favoured spot.

(To his Sister.)

"Paray-le-Monial,

"September 5th, 1873.

"This morning, the First Friday, I said the Mass of the Sacred Heart at the altar where the Sacred Heart revealed Itself, for you and yours.

"A. Dignam, S.J."

In October, 1873, Father Dignam was removed from Bournemouth and sent to Beaumont College to fill the post of Spiritual Father and of Missioner to the few externs who were allowed to frequent the boys' chapel.

When he received his orders for Beaumont, he left Bournemouth very quietly, and took leave of no one; this pained some of his friends, and he wrote to one of them.

(To A.)

"Yes, you must forgive my shabby exit, but I could not have borne partings. Be sure I carry your memories with me, and they will not desert me at the altar, I assure you. When you want me

you will find me unchanged, rely upon it. Were it not you know that a mother's bowels get somehow or other into a priest as his children learn to lean upon him, the change would be to me all joy. I have been longing for more peace and fewer responsibilities. Help dear old Father John all you can. God bless you all!"

When Father Dignam left Bournemouth, some of his friends were very much afraid that his health would suffer by a change from a house of comparative comfort for invalids to a college. This caused his sister some anxiety, but was only entertaining to one who was such a lover of community life and the society of his brethren, so he wrote a playful letter to cheer her up.

"Beaumont Lodge,

"November 25, 1873.

"About myself, my dear, from myself. Well, what shall I say? That the fall from being the centre point of everybody's interest to a mere common denominator is a dreadful blow to my self-love. That the housekeeper's anxious scrutiny, and constant supply of small comforts, have left a void which still aches; that the balmy sea breeze is poorly compensated by a Berkshire fog; but no, I will forbear to harrow your poor heart by confirming your worst forebodings, but I am bound to own—of course, in confidence—that I must be a virtuous person, to a degree, hitherto unknown to me; that is proved by the mere fact of my having survived."

A person who frequented the chapel at Beaumont thus speaks of him: "I remember the first day he went to the confessional to hear those who came on the Saturday. I met him at the door. Oh! the holy expression on that face as he looked up as if into Heaven! I think I shall never forget it; it seemed as if his whole soul had gone up to accept and offer his new mission to God; it greatly consoled me, and made me like him for his nearness to God, and I never knew anyone who had the same power to comfort and reassure a soul as he had."

The following letters were addressed to a married lady, living in the great world in which she was obliged, much against her will, to mix.

(To A.)

"You must find an opportunity of reading Montalembert's *St. Elizabeth*. She managed to live a highly spiritual life under greater difficulties than someone I know. I quite appreciate your wish, you know, my child, but still, whenever it grows a little bit too strong, you must set to work vigorously to cultivate a devotion to God's will, recalling that with Him there is no necessary connection between the sowing and the seed, and to conquer ourselves in not making a retreat is, at least, as good as making one without it. How truly I wish you every best blessing. I am so anxious that you should never lose sight of first principles, that your devotion should be to God's will pure and simple: that prayers, and Communions and church-goings,

are but creatures, are but means to an end, just as much as wine or money, and that some people are more in danger of inordinate affections to the former than the latter. On the sofa, then, just as well as at church, or 'in the kitchen,' or with the little ones—*Sume et Suscipe*. Mind, if you do but once make this thought your own, your peace will be very, very safe. God will always get what He wants from you. Turn your particular examen on to this in some practical way."

. . . . . .

"My dear Child in J.C.,—I am decidedly of opinion that your boy will have much greater advantages in making his First Communion at home. I could not wish him in better circumstances for it than he will have; only mind *you* don't overdo it—a boy is sadly perplexed and discouraged if he sees that he is expected to be all recollection and ecstasy. Seem to watch him as little as possible, especially as the day comes on, and carefully avoid appearing 'shocked' at anything. So he will do his part with greater internal recollection and sincerity as the temptations to human respect are reduced as far as may be to a minimum."

. . . . . .

(To A.)

"I have been anxious about you, but I want to find out whether you do not make a mistake between naughtiness and illness—oftentimes they have the same symptoms, and, mind, to be annoyed because we cannot smile as sweetly when we are

ill is simple vanity, and if we call *that* being irritable and disagreeable it is but a 'cloak to malice.'

. . . . . .

"You must be very good and brave now. Indeed, it will be well for you to see yourself as our Lord sees you at such a moment of trial as this. The pain you feel does not *in the least* point diminish the thoroughness of your conformity to His all-loving will, and *you must not think it does*. He, mind, has condescended to show us this Himself in the Garden, and you must get consolation from the thought—'Let us arm ourselves with the same thought.' It is a cross to me that your health has given way so sadly. I thought our Lord wanted you to get well—but His will be done. I shall keep you in my heart, my child, and all a father's love is there for you, as you know so well."

(To A.)

"You, too, I see plainly enough, are labouring in rowing, for the wind is 'contrary.'

"I startled a holy old nun the other day who is constantly thwarted in very important work by her bad health, by suggesting for the matter of her particular examen, to abolish resignation. It is a step in the spiritual life which I think I learned from ——, and I cannot help thinking that the same physic will do you good. It attacks the dull heaviness you speak of in your past letter in a surprising manner. I call it joy in God's will, and I put Our Lady of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross as the model of it. She was not resigned. It was

in no passive mood she co-operated with the Eternal Father in the oblation by which she willed to sacrifice her Child. And we, comparing sorrow with sorrow and sacrifice with sacrifice, can come to be brave, and transform what is passive and, perhaps sluggish, into a brighter and more resolute spirit. St. Jeanne Françoise de Chantal gives you an excellent picture of it, and, indeed, is no unsuitable patroness (as far as you go) in many another way. I laughed at your question, whether prefects get annoyed; for they do sometimes, just as you do. They are trained never to groan over their mistakes; lift their eyes upwards, and let the past go. *Then go on*, ever without trouble, trusting in God. I was glad you were quick to see some of the old *goût* for visiting our Lord had left you, for it is good to notice it, though there was nothing to be either astonished or shocked at. His sweet promise of Himself that His company hath no tediousness is so tenderly made true to those who hunger after His feet; and it may be that you miss some opportunities when He would be glad to welcome a few moments given to Him in your duties.

"I thank you truly for the kind prayers. It is such prayers I live upon and work upon, and as the work never stops, I need them so."

(To a Religious.)

"Some half-dozen letters ago you made my ears prick up by calling somebody or other a gentleman. You may guess my feeling when in these latter ones I find a priest summed up as 'in fine a perfect

gentleman,' and a whole community dismissed as not behaving 'like gentlewomen.' God help us, poor woman! do you know that St. Teresa denied that she was a gentlewoman? When you are going to add up people's gentility again, I beg you first to take a peep at St. Mark viii. 33, and *Imitation* i. 4, 2.

(LETTERS TO A NUN.)

"I am deeply grateful to God for the graces He gives you. Those brave little manifestations which so unflinchingly go to the very core of the heart's meanness, no matter though nature feels so vividly, 'how he must despise me,' are golden gifts—nay, the 'precious pearl' itself. Fail, fail, my child, everywhere, and as often as God will have it so. The work which will carry you to our Lord's own arms is being done. Do not fear. 'The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.'

. . . . . .

"Your resolution, if you want to keep strong, must be a strong one, and as you know, strength can only come from conviction. God is all as long as you seek Him, and Him alone; that is, so long as self is not yielded to, all is right; but *this is true*, all is right, so that sorrow or disturbance is out of place. The means is indifference, then, to all else but your office; and indifference means not thinking about, not wishing, not rejoicing, not grieving, but letting alone. This is your resolution. Give your whole heart to God, and live the hidden life."

Beaumont Lodge is three miles from Windsor, near the Thames, and in a beautiful part of Berkshire.

His stay there was a great rest to Father Dignam, and his health improved. As everywhere, he made himself liked; one of the masters having fallen ill, he volunteered to take a school *pro tem.*, and writes playfully that the boys were astonished to find he could turn out to be a Tartar in school-time; as they had always, up to this, found him "so very sweet," and that they groaned like the Jews under Pharaoh. However, he adds, it did not keep them away from his confessional; he had "an accession in numbers on Saturday."

His sister was inclined to think his spirituality would be rather thrown away on schoolboys. He replies, "You think boys' souls must be 'raw material.' I like you truly. Yes, perhaps they are, but still *material*, and that neither *jelly* nor *sand*."

Two or three boys had some slight illness, which it was thought might be contagious, and were placed in a small house in the grounds (the present fine sanatorium was not then built). Father Dignam shut himself up with them, and made them very happy. He told them stories by the score, and also used to read chapters of the Old Testament to them, in which they took the greatest delight. When the doctor pronounced the boys were safe, they all began to cry and said they had never been so happy in their lives.

To a person who had just made a general confes-

sion and wanted to see him again before going on a journey, he writes:

"If it were good for you, I would say, 'Come directly,' but your peace will be far better secured by bravely resisting. You shall tell me everything you remember when you return by-and-by, unless you have been so fortunate as to forget it all again in the meantime; but for the present bear as patiently as you can the teasing of your memory, and stick to the main things, gentleness and gratitude. *Suffer*, if need be, but do not let in anxiety. Keep the devil out in the cold. God bless you, my dear child."

(To a Nun.)

"You cannot even suspect how I thank God for all He is doing for your soul. How sure I am He will finish His own divine work; but you must, *you must* ask Him, trembling perhaps, but truly and really, and brave and trusting: 'Don't reward me in this world. Don't tell me when at last I may look into Your face, "Thou hast received thy reward."'

"I am grateful for what your courage has done; now let it begin again, and this time do more. A little fidelity to meditation and penance, and one thought how patiently and lovingly He is waiting in the Tabernacle for the generosity you are so capable of rewarding Him with.

. . . . . .

"You think I change so much—I hope it is not true. At any rate, I never gave anybody up yet,

and I shall have to change a good deal indeed before that comes. I don't think you are afraid of that, and so, if I were you, I wouldn't say it any more. If you really did use the note to the three classes as you say, what you wrote did not read at all like it. However, we must leave that alone till we may have an opportunity of studying the Exercises together. Change your P.E. as soon as you like, and go back to the eagerness eagerly. You never wrote to me too often; but you have too often told a tale of over-eagerness.

. . . . . .

"Your letter, in its patience and humility, is an infinite consolation to me, and DO believe that obstacles are graces—the harder to fight, the greater; the more they cost, the richer. A thousand thousand times better to live in struggle and humiliation, than in sweetness and triumph; so our Lord thought, so was it with Himself. Only *keep the eyes open.*"

After vacation Father Dignam returned to Beaumont Lodge, to fill the post of Father Minister.

During the winter some of the boys were ill with measles, and neither the nurses nor convalescent boys were allowed to go to the chapel. It is recollected by one of the former how, to his own great inconvenience, he would say Mass in some room to which these nurses and boys could come, and he said he would not let anyone lose a Mass through

his fault, and he remarked, also, one Communion missed was a disappointment to the Heart of Jesus.

(To a Novice Mistress.)

"I should like to welcome you out of your retreat. As to all the sinking of heart and strong temptations to bitterness and disgust, I have had all that for years and years, and I know it all by heart. But it is a pain which will be no pain at death—and those who have persevered loyally are, I think, the very ones who, in the deepest words even our Lord ever said to us, 'hate their own soul' —unless the grain die it remains itself alone. Ah, my dear child, ask for me some of your own courage against the poor self that is so unwilling to be put to death. . . . You can't say to your novices, 'You must observe this;' you can but say, 'This was told to me.' You must never *direct;* though the experience you have had you can use to instruct others; perhaps, it will be best of all to tell them that scruples are things to be *hated* (as being the first step to a lax conscience), and so to be fought against to the death. Pray for me, and may God *fill* you with blessing. . . .

"No, I don't advise any such consecration to our Lady. Where do you get such an idea from? It may be that such acts are good, but only when they proceed from some peculiar grace given to the soul—otherwise they are but forms without meaning. Just what the resolutions at the end of a retreat sound to a person who has not made it. No, love

our Lady—hope always to love her more, and go on. Never force yourself in prayer.

. . . . . .

"Long ago I tried to show you that CONTENTED SHAME must be at the root of all perfect contrition. You laughed at it then and called it high flown, and it may be; but it is a true flight for all that.

. . . . . .

"Let us leave all results in peace and calm to Him who is independent of all means—this is truly indifference. And so, because you have not been indifferent, *it is sure* you have been unequal, *distraite*, unsympathizing — *it could* not have been otherwise, and it was not possible for you to see it. Let *everybody* do as they will—only do one thing, bow your heart down with joy, and then to work again in *Nomine Jesu*.

"About those poor —— there surely should be but one view for those who know how much harm it does ourselves to censure, unless by duty we are forced to it. And if the Church hesitates, what shall we say of those who rush in to occupy her office? About writing to me, I wish no change except the change be in you. Let your letters be as they always have been, yourself.

"Tell X. that grumbling is a sin. Do talk to her about the chapter of the King's Highway, and try to give her courage to face it cheerfully. Surely this world is not so charming a place that we should be miserable when our friends go to Heaven, nor is it very consistent to make the Sacred Heart

our dwelling-place, and be very sad at being left alone with our Lord as the evening of life comes on."

In January, 1876, Father Dignam was sent to Manresa House, Roehampton, to fill the office of Spiritual Father and Missioner to the small number of externs who then attended the temporary chapel in the grounds. The Church of St. Joseph was not then built.

CHAPTER III.

RETREATS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.

"So desirous of you, we would gladly impart to you our own souls, because you were become most dear unto us. As you know in what manner entreating and comforting you (as a father doth his children)."

ONE of his religious brethren[1] says that Father Dignam was "devoted for many years to the work of giving the Spiritual Exercises, and that it was a most consoling and fruitful work for which he had great aptitude," and another of his brethren says,[2] "that he had given retreats with the greatest success in numerous religious houses in England, in which he had found great consolation and which had produced much fruit." And a third Father,[3] who lived with him for many years, speaks thus of his retreats and sermons: "Wealth of ideas, striking and practical, ascetical hints, beauty and originality of style and diction, and graceful, but quietly impressive delivery were not the only reasons which made people like his retreats.

"Many people seemed to turn to him, as it were, by a kind of instinct for spiritual direction."

[1] Father Fanning, S.J. [2] *Messenger*, vol. x. p. 322.
[3] Father Egger, S.J.

Our readers will remember how when only a scholastic, in 1861, he begged his sister to ask for him "the spirit of the Exercises, perfect knowledge of them, so that I may be penetrated through with their spirit in all its length and breadth and depth and height."

This prayer was certainly answered. The Exercises, if we may so speak, took possession of him, and by the principles they teach he governed his whole life and the lives of those whom he directed. It was always a joy to him to expound the Exercises; and to do this, he seemed able to support more fatigue than in any other occupation. In his hands the Exercises seemed to become a mine of gold and jewels, from which "treasure" he "brought forth things new and old;" for while he kept closely to the text of the Exercises, he was able to give many new thoughts and meanings to each subject. This was constantly remarked in places where he gave retreats for several years in succession. The number of retreats he gave can hardly be ascertained, and even the list of places where he gave them is probably imperfect. He does not seem to have been employed in large "Missions," except on three occasions, but he often gave short retreats to the laity in public churches. He gave retreats in several monasteries of Benedictine monks, to the Christian Brothers, the Jesuit scholastics, and the clergy of the Plymouth and Salford dioceses. Also to the Augustinian Canonesses Regular of Lateran and the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, to several Convents of the

Sisters of Mercy and to various Convents of the Good Shepherd, to the Convents of Notre Dame at St. Helens, Blackburn, and Liverpool, to the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, to the Nuns of the Holy Child and the Institute of Mary at York. Then he gave retreats to ladies, to the Children of Mary, pupil teachers, Penitents of the Good Shepherd, students of the Training College, Liverpool, reformatory children, young women of the House of Mercy, Blandford Square, to St. Joseph's Association at St. Helens, the Promoters of the Apostleship, and to the pupils of several convent boarding schools.

The following is an account of a retreat given by him in a Refuge:

"The first time I saw him he came to give the Penitents' Retreat. There were a great many of them, and most of them were very giddy and worldly-minded, and there were some who were thoroughly unrepentant. He began the retreat as though they were going to have a nice time of it. He made them smile, and then, in earnest, about what the retreat meant. He talked at them as though (as they said afterwards), he had been Head Mistress for years. He gave such a retreat as they never had before. As he went on, some of the most careless became real lovers of the Man-God. Words of mine can give no idea of what Father Dignam did for them. He talked to them in a way all his own. Familiar, yet it was the *born* priest who was among them by the way, till he led the soul into a track which he seemed to have laid down. And

soon they found themselves face to face with a priest who loved his God with a love that must have grown out of having lived with this Man-God, talked and walked with Him, and who had a power to make them live a life such as they had never dreamt of. He made our Lord seem indeed a real living Lord, who might walk in amongst them some day. It is hard to explain the real depth of this way of the Father, because I cannot describe the difficulties that had to be overcome.

"These poor girls are sharp, and the good must be very *real*, or they will take very little heed of it. He could and *did* accomplish more good work for God than any priest I ever knew or hope to know again."

A Benedictine Father, belonging to a monastery at which Father Dignam gave several retreats, writes as follows:

"I am very sorry to say that I have lost the book in which I had my notes of poor Father Dignam's retreats. I am afraid I cannot recall anything which I could be quite sure belonged to that retreat, the only one I had the grace to hear from his lips. I do indeed remember one of the discourses on the Passion. It was a very simple narration of the Holy Passion in the very words of Holy Scripture. Scarcely a word was put in by Father Dignam. His idea seemed to be that put into St. John's mouth by the poet Browning, to state somewhat of the Lord's life and let it work. The effect upon the community was most marked, and when the retreat was over, everyone was saying

how simple, and yet how telling, was the discourse on the Passion. Without the notes, I find I cannot put down anything.

"It is now more than ten years since that retreat. My memory is not fit to trust for so long a period. Except during that retreat, I never saw the good Father."

He took great interest in the Penitents of the Good Shepherd. He writes to one of the nuns:

"I did not forget your dead child—[the Penitents are called children by the nuns]—I always make a commemoration in my Mass for the children." And when they were about to begin a retreat, he writes: "I shall pray earnestly that the Father may be blessed with great success." And another year he writes: "I shall pray for you and for your flock, that the retreat may be greatly blessed."

When giving a retreat to the Penitents at Hammersmith, before the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, he wanted them to have some extra devotion, and the nuns said they feared, in that case, the laundry-work would not be done, as it was a very busy week.

"Leave that to me," he said, and at the beginning of the retreat, he appealed to the "children" to undertake this devotion, and do the work well. "I have *pledged* myself to your Mothers," he said, "about the *work*, because I *depend on you*."

Never was the work so well and so quickly done—never was a retreat made more fervently—time was found for all.

Another time, on hearing of a death among the

Penitents, he writes: "I was touched by your account of poor Magdalen of the Holy Souls, and can imagine the expression with which Mother Mary of the Blessed Sacrament will have received her in Heaven."

He writes once of a retreat given to the Children of Mary in a large town: "I have two hundred poor girls here, so good and pure and generous, in the midst of vice."

Probably Father Dignam's field of predilection for retreats was in convents. He was emphatically the *friend of nuns*, and certainly had a marvellous power of understanding, and, therefore, of course, of helping them. It is not easy to express what his retreats were to many nuns; they were never found to be tedious or too long. "I always dread the fifth day," was often said, "because then more than half is over."

"We are still living in the brightness of the retreat," wrote a Superior.

In many communities this feeling about him was unanimous, and in that case, Superiors were anxious to secure his services in successive years. In others he did not suit all dispositions, and used playfully to say that now and again he found he was not relished by all, and some would say, "Paul and I differ."

In 1883, Father Dignam was withdrawn from the work of giving retreats in convents, and gave afterwards but very few anywhere. As time went on, he was absorbed by his other occupations.

This withdrawal from convents naturally caused

much grief in them, and was keenly felt by himself, for he was too full of sympathy not to feel for the sorrow of others. Yet he never made any objection, or showed surprise or vexation. When questioned as to the reasons, he replied: "I *know nothing* about it," and at once proclaimed anew, as it were, his watchword. "The will of God is best for each and all. . . . You ought not to fear that good will not come of it. You know how often what has seemed a cross has proved a blessing and a gain. . . . The arrangement for the retreat is doubtless the best. It is likely, I fear, to prove an exceptional year for most of the convents, and we can only hope and pray that there may not be much suffering. Very few Fathers will be at liberty."

This was on account of the Provincial Congregation at Stonyhurst to choose deputies to go to Rome in September for the election of the Very Reverend Father General.

One community felt very deeply not being able to have him for the next retreat, and he wrote:

"I quite understand and sympathize with your distress, but pray do not attribute the disappointment to any absurd and unreal cause. It must be our Lord's own doing, and so He will take care that it shall be no loss to you, though, perhaps, some suffering. Do not grieve about it. God arranges so many disappointments of this kind that it *must* be good, and I am certain if you use the faith that is in you, you will have fit cause for thanksgiving about it at last."

A few people had the good fortune to make

private retreats under Father Dignam's direction, and others often wrote to him for advice when they were making such retreats at a distance, or when they were about to join, or had joined, in a community retreat. At one time his sister was about to make a private retreat. He wrote to her about it, and finally made out a complete retreat for her to follow:

"Take care not to pour out too much solicitude upon your coming retreat. When you begin, give yourself so to the point to be thought of at present as if the whole retreat were in that. Don't recall what the next meditation is to be till the time comes to prepare it. When preparing one meditation don't let your eyes fall on the next, put your blotting paper over the page. That is a very important hint for avoiding desolation, of which, perhaps, the less the better. If, as should be, it seems, you are on the matter of sin on the Tuesday, I should think it more profitable to miss the Communion. I do not approve of four meditations for you, and have only marked three. Do not go and show it about after your retreat, nor pour yourself out about yourself; take care of that. No matter how much you are taken up with the last meditation, go to the next with simplicity when the time comes. Thoughts of past meditations seldom injure the present one. Read the *documenta aurea* of Father Roothaan, the last day or two of the retreat. Don't do much, but well, and God bless you."

To M. G., who had been using during her

private retreat the *Journal des Retraites de Père Olivaint, S.J.*, and who had been struck with that Father's frequent use of the prayer, "Lord, take care of me, for if Thou dost not, this day I shall betray Thee," he writes:

"I thank God for His goodness to you. How truly sure I am also that it will bear good fruit. My child, what Père Olivaint said, and what St. Francis Borgia had said before him, and what you echo now, I have more occasion to say than you, so your warning does not frighten me, nor lessen my firm trust that the Divine Heart's love will lead you through failures to strength, and through humiliation to glory at last. Alas, I have not had time yet to read more than a few pages of your notes, but I have seen enough to know that what I want is there—reality in going against self, for God's sake, in God's trust. I believe that you will profit greatly from your self-privation with respect to the Holy Communion, and that our Lord will be honoured by it. God bless you with His best blessing, my dear child."

(To the same a Year later.)

"I send you a little book to help you in your retreat, and I will pray much for a blessing on it, my dear child."

The book spoken of was *Immolation et Charité dans le Gouvernement des Ames*, par le R. P. Giraud—surely one of the most beautiful books ever written on the subject.

(To the Same, another year).

"I felt deeply that even if your retreat was broken, the light of it was certainly from God. Somehow lights on the fundamental meditation are always especially precious.

"The devil, however, is egregiously taking you in about ingratitude. When God gives the light to recognize it, and you regard that ingratitude, thus more clearly recognized, with displeasure, you are doing what God wants. If in your incapacity to *feel* more you humble yourself, you are pleasing God still more. If you ask for the grace to be grateful, and very grateful, and always grateful, and to understand how truly St. Austin calls gratitude *substantia religionis*, then tell me why should the coldness of your heart make you hopeless when it is against your will? Use your time of meditation to count God's mercies on your fingers, and you may laugh at the danger of ingratitude becoming a habit. It is the easiest of all virtues to learn. God bless you, my dear child."

. . . . . .

(To a Nun after a Retreat.)

"See to the correction of all negligence in the spiritual duties themselves. It is an essential lesson of the Exercises, and yet, perhaps, so often overlooked, that you may not have learnt it in your retreats, that the practice of exactness in spiritual duties may be made (and if exercised with the highest motives is) the most substantial and perfect

practice of poverty of spirit. Take St. Ignatius' meditation on Hell and study the second prelude, the petition for the particular fruit of the meditation in the Saint's own words. . . . He implores 'an intimate sense of the pains which the damned souls endure.' Why does he petition for a grace so dreadful? It is in order that if ever through his negligences he should suffer his love to grow cold, at least this sense of the pains of the damned may be there to save him from sin. Could there be a more vivid picture of poverty of spirit in one who loves God intensely? The contrition which is actually burning in his heart is pure with the purity of seraphic love. None the less, so real is his spiritual poverty, that he fears what he is, still more what he may become, should he let the negligence, which he feels himself prone to, creep into his life; and therefore he prays that the fear of Hell may be *intimately* present to his soul. This rare, this excellent poverty of spirit is so perfect a practice of interior humility, so effectively undermines the spirit of proud self-reliance, that even to study it makes us ashamed of ourselves. Additions, preludes, remote preparation for prayer—all these, it says to itself, others who are holy and humble and highly gifted may perhaps afford to neglect; but *I* who have fallen so low, who have learnt, at such bitter cost, what relying on myself can bring me to —I can neglect none of them! They are God's kind gifts to my littleness; by means of them I may grow rich and strong, but woe to me if I waste them. This same spirit makes us *grateful* for each

spiritual duty as it comes as for an alms from God; makes us patient and constant in aridity as the poor are at the gate; humble and astonished when light and sweetness come; but, above all careful, exact, reverent, like poor people in a drawing-room."

(To M., after a Private Retreat.)

"You were not satisfied with your retreat — I was. I think you did the best you could under the circumstances; though, perhaps, there was not much for self-complacency to feed on. God's grace and painfully-earned wisdom will have their effect on your soul. Aim quietly but firmly at detachment, for that makes room for all good things."

(To a Religious, making a Community Retreat.)

"And the poor, poor child in her retreat. I ask our Lady to save you from the dangers of overwork; to give you so true and single a desire of our Lord's good pleasure that the word may be verified: 'Love feels no burden, values no labour. It is able, therefore, to do anything; and it performs and effects many things, where he that loves not faints and lies down.'

"Ah, my dear child, deepen, deepen the spirit of penance, and then He will have His own way with you, for the love will be true. I hope for *great* graces for you."

Before the pupils of the convent at Bruges went into retreat he wrote:

"I am praying very especially about this retreat, which I am confident our Lord will make an instru-

ment for His glory. At such times I know the Religious often want the prayers at least as much as the exercitants, since so much of the fruit depends upon the impression they leave on their old pupils. May the Sacred Heart fill them all with Its own wisdom and charity."

(To a Nun.)

"I am indeed glad you have had so beautiful a retreat, and I am sure it will make happy hearts all round when Christmas comes.

"I have read your papers with much interest, and I am indeed grateful to God who gives you such great graces. You are beginning in good earnest to see at last in self your worst enemy, and it is, after all, in the personal and practical recognition of this truth *for me* that each one of us must find the beginnings of a serious interior life. You are aiming high, my dear child, and I praise you for it, but more than ever you will need to remember that patience with your own faults is necessary, and that there is no practical virtue that will last if we forget that by getting up every time we tumble down is the only way to go to God."

Father Dignam was an excellent preacher. His delivery was very pleasant, avoiding the two extremes of violent action or monotony. His clear and melodious voice was never pitched too high nor too low, his language well chosen, often eloquent, and his deductions incisive.

In St. Helens he was very popular as a preacher, and he soon caught the knack of adapting himself

to a Lancashire audience. One amusing story is told of a sermon. He had preached with more energy than usual, and some of his hearers told the nuns of Notre Dame that it was a "wonderful sermon," and brought back word that Sister C—— said, "Oh, I know all about that. As if it were he that was preaching. *He has got a sister.* It is she who does the preaching."

"As a preacher," remarks a Catholic writer, "Father Dignam was always interesting and instructive. I have many of his sermons in my old note-books.

Two of Father Dignam's religious brethren have spoken of him as a spiritual director. The first says: "It was evident to Father Dignam's Superiors that he was a man highly gifted in a spiritual sense, and that he was a clever and prudent director of souls."

The second, who lived with him for years in intimate friendship, remarks: "He was good at listening to those who needed advice or consolation. He readily grasped the leading points on which practical doubts or difficulties hinged, and he was prompt, positive, and decisive in making up his mind about questions, and he had a way of giving his decision which relieved the persons he advised from all further anxiety, uncertainty, and doubt.

"To a casual observer the decision and precision with which he often settled most difficult and complicated questions and doubts might have appeared rash, but those who knew him intimately, and had occasion to watch the workings of his active mind

could not fail to see that this was the result of mature and thoughtful experience, study, observation and meditation.

"Nor did he fail to ask advice himself, if at liberty to do so, in unusually complicated cases, before his final decision; and even when he had formed his own opinion he was ready to re-consider it with those whose judgment he could trust till he was satisfied that the subject had been looked at from every point of view, and in every available light. He was large in his views, and careful not to lead those whom he advised to look upon matters as grave sins or positive obligations which cannot be proved to be so.

"He was most anxious that his penitents should not create a false conscience for themselves, but yet he led them, not only to avoid sin, but to yearn after sanctity, and to aim at perfection of their own free and generous choice.

"He became a safe and successful director of souls, not only because his theological knowledge was accurate, and his ascetical views were sound and sensible, but because he had an intuitive power of judging people's characters and dispositions."

We have it on the authority of St. Francis de Sales that the art or gift of spiritual direction is rare. Certainly, Father Dignam possessed this gift; he loved the task, and gave his best energies to it. His natural gifts were all brought into play —his power of deep sympathy, his extraordinary memory and his interest in details. When penitents

who only saw him at long intervals, perhaps of years, were told: "Oh, I heard that before; you told me that long ago," they were consoled and encouraged; they felt he made them, as it were, part of his own soul. Thus the words of St. Paul seem to apply to him exactly: "*So desirous of you, we would gladly impart to you our own souls, because you were become most dear unto us. As you know in what manner, entreating and comforting you (as a father doth his children).*" Each one felt that he cared for and loved his or her soul; that he would have made any sacrifice for it; that its joys and sorrows were his also. He had the gift of *attractiveness*, which drew people to him, and he had also the power of inspiring boundless trust in him.

At times he was very severe, so severe that it was only his extreme tenderness that made it possible for it to be endured. Père Lacordaire's description of what a true priest should be like is a real picture of Father Dignam: *Fort comme un diamant, plus tendre qu'une mère.*[1]

Some of his penitents thought that he must have greatly resembled the Ven. Claude de la Colombière in his direction. There were certainly singular traits of likeness between the two lives. Both devoted to the Sacred Heart and lovers of the Spiritual Exercises, the special *friends of nuns*, obliged to carry on direction by correspondence chiefly, both in delicate health, and both interested in details. Father Claude's remark in a letter written from London to a penitent in France who

[1] Hard as a diamond, more tender than a mother.

consulted him about her dress: "I do not like the scarlet gown; *c'est trop éclatant*," has a touch of Father Dignam about it.

Father Dignam guided his penitents by the Spiritual Exercises, which he seemed to condense into three principles:

(1) An absolute devotion to the Will of God as the fruit of the Foundation.

(2) A real and abiding contrition, with deep shame as the fruit of the purgative way.

(3) A generous love of Jesus Christ, resulting in a close imitation of Him as the fruit of all the rest, the key-stone of the arch rising up to Heaven.

He was the living model of one who lived by these principles. His conformity to the Will of God breathes in every word of his letters, as it did in every action of his life. From this sprang his absolute obedience; he *revelled* in obedience because he knew that in obeying he was doing God's Will.

Once some gentlemen friends were lamenting over him because he had answered their query of what he was going to do for the next month or so by saying: "I have not the smallest idea. I have no orders."

"How dreadful it must be," said they, "never to be able to form plans for yourself."

"Dreadful!" he exclaimed, "why, it is my greatest happiness. If I were told to-morrow I might do as I liked, I should be miserable."

The spirit of contrition, also, was indeed his. He once said to a penitent that he never made his morning meditation without first bringing all his past

sins around him; and when she replied that this method would not help *her*, he said: "Well, I could not feel true before God. I could not speak to Him before I had done this." He often said that people did not pray enough for the gift of tears, and yet there is a special Mass for it in the Missal. He certainly possessed that gift. It is true, he was more easily drawn to tears of emotion than men generally are; but his tears would also flow at the thought of the Passion and the outrages which sin offers to the Sacred Heart.

(To a Lady in the World.)

"God has, no doubt, wonderfully different ways of dealing with souls; but, so far as my little knowledge goes, if the brains are clear like yours; and, the will obedient, He usually grants, after a time, to one who is well directed, established peace. Desolation may come in any of its forms, but the peace is sure. Such is the soul in which the Holy Ghost operates, without obstacle, His blessed Will. There are multitudes of others who are generous and beautiful; but they are subject to episodes of *bouleversement*, and cannot be trusted to walk steadfastly beneath a very great cross; for if it lasts very long, they break down utterly—and I know nothing in which a director is more likely to be mistaken than in these two souls.

"I do not pretend to say more than what my own little experience teaches me. Never have I known a really steadfast soul in whom the distinctive feature of the inner life was not the love of self-abjection;

never have I known the love of self-abjection (though I acknowledge it *may* be, and others may have known it) without profound and intense sorrow for sin. These are the only souls whom I have found *delivered* from doubt and diffidence, who smile at the Cross, and lead crucified lives, I do not say with resignation, but without counting the cost. (Of course, I am not speaking of the states of soul of which mystical theology treats, which we have nothing to do with here.)

"You see the disadvantage we have here to cope with; since evidently sorrow for sin must not be sought for the sake of other ultimate gifts that come from it, but in simplicity, for its own sake, for truth's sake, for God. Moreover, it is not what can ordinarily be learnt out of a book, still less out of a letter, but in prayer, in retreat, with a confessor, to whom the newly-found folds and recesses of meanness and self-love are laid bare with an unflinching courage.

"Even now, having perfect confidence in your docility (I tell you that at last), I may not venture to say that this is what you have never learnt. I only say: 'It is what I have never discovered in your soul; it is what the things I *have* discovered appear to indicate the need of, before even the foundations of sanctity can be laid.'

"Sorrow for sin, I need scarcely tell you—I mean an intense and pervading sorrow for sin—has no connection with grossness of act, or if it has, it is accidental. St. Aloysius, St. Teresa, and Blessed Margaret Mary are our models no less

than Magdalene; but to be useful, they must be understood: for in them there was not a shadow of unreality or exaggeration, while they lay blushing with shame and abject before God, recognizing the intimate baseness and abomination of their own thoughts, words, and deeds, and crying in their hearts every day and every hour with purest sincerity, like Father de la Puente: 'Lord, when Thou comest to judgment do not condemn me.' It is only they and those like them who have light enough and wisdom enough to pray unceasingly to God with St. Austin, 'Let me know myself.'

"Have not, then, any fear of your *épanouissement* —long may God grant it to you, my child! But, you say, 'mingled with illusion.' There is no illusion. Ignorance is not illusion. All that you are saying to our Lord comes from a sincere and docile heart. It will acquire unknown depths of humility, and gratitude, and love, and devotedness, as you come gradually to know a little of what you are and what you have cost His love. With the shame will come graces which as yet you know nothing of, and you will say: '*I knew not that she was the mother of them all.*' I have said all this to you before, but I am obliged to say it again. When you tell me, '*All these have I kept from my youth,*' I shall know better."

. . . . . .

He insisted greatly on the use of *shame*. He says to one: "You can never come to a life of simplicity until shame has become dear to you—so dear, that the more our Lord lifts you the more you will cling

to it. It is your only fit attire. You have robbed God of His glory; try at least to be a penitent thief. It is only in one's own true shape and colour that one ought to dare to appear before God—ashamed. It is only when, in this robe of our own shame, we prostrate ourselves at His feet, that we are perfectly true. In any other dress we are but travestied.

. . . . . .

"The Saints *lived* on their own shame; it was the fuel of their love. 'By this I know,' cried St. Teresa, 'what I am and what Thou art, O Jesus Christ.'"

. . . . . .

With contrition, hope was always to reign supreme. He taught that contrition and *shame* on which he always insisted as a part of true contrition, were the real foundation of *hope*, and that the more sorry and ashamed of our sins we are, the more we learn to trust implicitly in our Lord.

"Self-abasement," he writes, "is the only soil in which the anchor of hope rests firm."

Father Dignam never lost an opportunity of dwelling upon any fault of his own while giving direction to others. The following answer to a letter from a nun shows the ingenuity with which this was accomplished.

She had written to him in strong terms of her own shortcomings. "The devotion to the Sacred Heart," she wrote, "about which I make so much talk, the true spirit of reparation and unselfish devotedness, has no place in me at all—is quite unknown to me. So, of course, the Apostleship

does not do the good it ought to do in the house; no, nor in the world." The Father replied: "Your letter was a perfect meditation. It presently began to make its application to myself, and I must confess it was a painfully real one." He quotes her words again: "Worldliness, selfishness, and most of all, no *real* piety. Creatures first; God second."

He continues: "Every word you say became my own." Then quotes further: "I am convinced that the only way to do good is to make devotion to the Sacred Heart flourish—but *true*, *solid*, *earnest* devotion."

He then asks her, applying her own words to himself: "How am *I* to plant it when I have not even the seeds of it in my own heart?" Again quoting: "Nonsensical, sentimental, artificial talk." "Yes," he says, "to get rid of that and, as you say, to bring in instead *solid* piety, *true* love of that Divine patient Heart." Then follow these touching words: "*I* have been trying so long, but with so little success. I would to God I knew some better means than to go on trying and to bear my failures as patiently as I can."

On another occasion he wrote to a Religious:

"The soul which knows no bounds to its self-abasement knows how to conquer God. This is so easy to say—the easier, perhaps, the less one has of practical knowledge of what the words mean. To my shame, I acknowledge it. But you must be grateful when our Lord puts you where the battle is hardest, and you must not be saddened when He forces you to see how poor a scholar you still

are in the school of humility. To go straight from the exercise of unbounded power and influence to the practice of submission which no one sees to be hard but yourself and God, and to have to bear the bitterness of defeat with no one to sympathize—this, after all, is the school of the saints, though the scholar is poor."

(To a Spiritual Child.)

"The idea, of course, of the guard of honour is reparation, especially for the forgetfulness of Catholics, and I should be very glad to have a large share of it for myself. Living, as I do, with our dear Lord almost literally at a few feet from where I sit, it would be no small comfort to feel that I had a little deputy doing Him honour, while I, alas! so often forget all about His being there. You must not push people beyond their inclination for your perpetual atonement, though I am very glad you are not forgetting it. Don't go too far. God will have His own way with you, my dear child, and you are His most truly. Do not repine at His providence, for it is a life most sweetly like His own, in the midst of those who knew Him not. I wish best Christmas blessings, constancy, peace, and brightness, that you may give Him a service in all things pleasing, but especially in the way you bear with your own faults. God bless you."

One of his penitents writes: "I cannot tell you how many little practices, which *he* suggested and *I* neglected, keep recurring to me now, and how much direction, which I could not then take in or

assimilate, now proves most helpful. Much as he must have been disappointed in me, his patience never failed, and now I am feeling daily and hourly the fruit of the training and teaching he lavished on me. May it tend more and more to increase his joy and glory in Heaven. I shall never forget the rapt expression of his face, as one day, after a long conversation, he exclaimed: 'A soul in love with shame,' and then added a few words on the next era in the spiritual life that took place when this spirit began to dawn upon the soul."

Father Dignam was remarkable for his bright, hopeful spirit; indeed, hope was a predominant virtue in him. The first time that one of his penitents saw him she said she had yielded to despondency.

"Well, if you *want* to offend our Lord," he replied, "that is the way to do it."

He soon found out that discouragement and despondency were rooted in this soul, and it had resisted strong endeavours on the part of other directors to overcome it.

In the course of a few years of his direction the root was torn up, for he had a method of dealing with this spiritual disease which often succeeded. He never made light of the faults that weigh down the desponding; he quite agreed that the faults were serious, frequent, wilful, *but* that our Lord's love was not affected by them. Thus penitents (as is usual in this spiritual malady) could not say, "He does not understand me; he won't listen to me; he does not know how bad I am—how weak I am."

They were taken at their word, and thus gradually from confidence in him passed to confidence in our Lord, and learnt to believe in *His* infinite love and boundless compassion. He was for ever endeavouring to use the affection his children felt for him to draw them to the love of his Master. Some of his penitents used to repeat on leaving him the words that were said of St. Francis de Sales: "If Mgr. de Génève is so good, what *must* his Master be?"

His hopefulness was another trait of resemblance between him and Ven. Claude de la Colombière. One of his favourite prayers was that wonderful act of hope composed by this holy Jesuit which must surely inspire the faintest heart with courage. There was not a shade of melancholy about him. "Bright and sparkling" were words used to describe him, and, indeed, a true description—he was always cheerful and generally smiling—

> A smile on his face,
> Full of a sweet peculiar grace.

His laugh was joyous, and he enjoyed a joke or amusing story exceedingly. He was a delightful companion, with great conversational powers and quick repartee. Naturally he would have been sarcastic, but he kept a strict guard over this, and by degrees it seemed to disappear.

A Religious once was reproved for having written that she felt "low." He replied, "Low, indeed. Just like an old woman in a village."

Certainly the effect of his direction upon many souls was remarkable. A rooted irritability of

temper, which had become a life-long habit disappeared and was replaced by cheerful, meek endurance. A hankering after the world and its vanities was changed into an intense love of spiritual things. One who had been over diffident and timid became calm, firm, and courageous. The talkative learnt to be silent, the impulsive prudent, the self-willed obedient under his fostering care. All that he required in his penitents was candour and docility, and if he had the first he would wait patiently for the second. Faults, numerous, rooted and excessive, never dismayed him.

A nun thus writes of him: "At first I found him a most uncomfortable priest to deal with—he was half full of fun—but I felt he knew me, and I did not wish to be known; and this was not pleasant. His words made me in earnest. I went to confession, and from that hour to this day I have not been the same. If I had not been one of his children, I should not have known how to look at things as I do now. It was not books I needed, but the living voice of a priest, and not stiff and straight, who would talk like a book, but the *noble-minded*, gentle, *clever*, real man and real Priest of God. Only this sort of one could do for me what he did. He was very strict, especially about charity; he could not excuse a shadow of want of charity."

Another penitent says: "I can never forget his advice; it is as fresh in my memory as if given yesterday. What struck me particularly in him was his complete absence of self. His one absorbing thought was the love of our Lord and *His interests*,

and his greatest desire was to rekindle in the hearts of his children the same sentiments. He was like his Master in patience, gentleness, and humility, and yet, withal, there was a firmness which made you feel you must obey, and which supported you when wavering. He had a marvellous power of reading you through and through. He once informed me that he could see I was worse than I saw myself, and I am sure the picture was bad enough.

"In his dealings with you he made you feel that his whole attention was directed to you individually. How he could remember every little detail years after its occurrence was astonishing. Over and over again I have begged him to bless me, and I am sure he does, and that he watches over me, and, as on earth he was interested in me, will be so still."

The following description of a distinguished man[1] is so exceedingly like Father Dignam that we cannot forbear from quoting it:

"His countenance indicated an unbounded reverence. It was as if his consciousness of the greatness of what is above us rendered him but half-conscious of the things around. . . . With his habitual reverence there went a corresponding humility as regards himself, and an unvariable courtesy in his intercourse with all others. He seemed always to think

[1] Sir William Rowan Hamilton, Astronomer Royal in the Dublin University, of whom Aubrey de Vere says, in the article (*Century*, October, 1894) from which we quote, he was "the man of the greatest intellect that I have ever known."

it likely that he might be mistaken, while in every neighbour, however full of infirmities, it was the human being that he saw, and one invested with all the rights and dignities which belong to humanity."

Father Dignam, of course, saw far more than this in the human soul, and he longed to make each one know that soul's true dignity as the object of the love of the Sacred Heart. One of his characteristics was his reverence.

He wrote once to a penitent: "When a person has really acquired the spirit of reverence, then he is very nearly a saint."

These words read like a prophecy concerning himself.

This spirit of reverence led him to have a great horror of any one having a contempt of another, because each one is God's image, and loved by Him, and he had a special horror of this in religious life. How could one nun look down on another, since each is the spouse of Christ; and still more on a Superior, who holds the place of Christ the Lord?

Of course, as a priest and director, he could not "always think it likely he might be mistaken," but his humility led him often to distrust his own judgment and easily own himself in the wrong, and when consulted on difficult points, he would write to St. Beuno's for a theological opinion, or to Father Morris, S.J., whose learning and judgment he highly esteemed.

His reverence sprang from his lively faith. He seemed almost to realize the things of the unseen world. He was a priest for twenty-seven years, and,

as he never omitted Mass, except in severe illness, we may safely calculate that he said at least nine thousand seven hundred and seventy Masses, yet we may truly say, his last Mass was like his first, full of wondering awe, how he, a creature, could be allowed to perform so great an act, and it was this awe, combined with his natural slowness of action, which made him a little longer at Mass than the ordinary time. This reverence he tried to impress on others—great reverence for confession. He could not bear any carelessness in God's service, any want of reverence in speaking of holy things. He often inculcated a reverent posture in prayer, often said that folding the palms together like a little child was a help to child-like prayer, and when one of his penitents told him that from illness she could hardly ever kneel, he said, "Poor child, I call that a *real* misfortune." And with a spirit of reverence all were to seek spiritual direction. Thus, when one person was coming some distance to see him and he knew how the very prospect of seeing him would fill her heart with joy, he wrote: "Pray God with an honest heart to help you to make a truly supernatural use of it."

Another penitent was very anxious indeed to see him; but, to do so, would have involved a long journey on his part, for which his Superiors were not likely to give permission, but she was foolish enough to suppose that this was his own fault.

"It would not be like you to yield to a judgment about me while you were still feeling the pain. It is too soon to judge. Do you think I have no

feeling? Yet I see too well that there is not motive enough for coming now even if it were possible—for we have not turned our backs on nature to put work aside for the sake of joy."

Another of his penitents writes: "What a true picture of our dear Father is given in that exquisite description of a priest in Mrs. Norton's poem of which Lady Georgiana Fullerton was so fond, saying, 'it was one of the three poems she loved best in the world.' How truly was he

> God's pity—clothed in an apparent form.

When I think of the first day I ever opened my heart to him (I have kept the date sacred ever since, as a turning-point in my life), I can truly say he

> Probed the soul's festering wounds and brought relief,
> And taught the sore vexed spirit where to find
> Balm that could heal.

How often in later years, when after probably a long interval, I at last brought my burden to him, were these words true—

> And when he answers her, she seems to know,
> The peace of resting by a river's flow
> Tender his words and eloquently wise.

Such indeed was our dear Father, and his loss is terrible. I can only say my *Fiat*."

One of his children says of him: "What I remarked in him most of all was his transparent truthfulness. Others have called this his reality; he was so *real*. But to my mind it was more than reality; truth was the atmosphere in which he lived. All kind of deceit was abhorrent to him.

He could never feign. When asked about the lawfulness of concealments and ambiguity in speech, such as are laid down by casuists, he said, 'No doubt these may be quite lawful to others, but for myself I could never use them.' Once during a retreat he asked a question which was answered hastily and inaccurately. It was so trifling that I hesitated about telling him of it, but I did so, and he replied, 'I know it was a trifle, but I should not have been happy if you had not told me.' These words planted a love of accuracy in my heart."

Another person says: "He once rendered me a great service, but yet I was not satisfied, and was disappointed. I felt it seemed terribly ungrateful to show this, but his truthful eyes were on me, so I had to say what I felt, adding that I was sorry not to be able to agree with him, and show the gratitude I really felt. 'Well,' he said, 'you are open and honest, and that is worth any amount of gratitude.' Years afterwards experience had made me change my judgment, and I told him so. I *then* saw how much pain I had given him before, and which he had concealed. His face lighted up. 'Thank God,' he said; 'I never thought I should hear you say this, as you never deceive.'"

To a penitent he said: "Always be true. In our Lord's mouth was found no guile. We are here on earth only for a little time, and we cannot *deceive God*, but we can deceive others. Let us not be so blind, so vain and foolish as to please our own vainglory. Boasting is against humility. The world laughs at the sincere and truthful, they are

called simple, and those who are not are looked upon as clever, and full of good sense. This is the language of the world, not of God."

Father Dignam held corporal mortification in high esteem, although he was exceedingly cautious in counselling its use. He gives the following instructions on fasting:

"As regards fasting, there are graces which are special, and which a mere dispensation, however legitimate, by no means guarantees. Hence, those who are unable to fast only obtain those special graces in proportion to the reality and fervour of their desires, which are by no means easy to have. We, therefore, who may not fast, should look on the privation with a lowly fear and regret, which is a very different thing from the half angry indocility which some are tempted to on the subject."

He was most anxious that those dispensed from fasting should never take it as a matter of course, but always have some little penance in commutation, as it were. Hence he counselled the S.M.G. nuns to have the *Miserere* said by all every fast day on which they were dispensed, and he approved of their shortening their recreation on those days, and so offering to our Lord additional silence and prayer, and also if they were unable to use much corporal penance never to neglect a small amount, lest their reverence for bodily austerity should decay; and always to regard with deep respect those Religious Orders which are bound by their rule to long fasts and vigils, continual abstinence, and other frequent austerities.

He was fond of calling himself unmortified, first because his strength did not allow him to undertake severe corporal penance; but it may be fairly guessed that he did more than he was well able to do in this direction; also he held himself remiss in mortification in all things, but the following advice given to a Religious clearly emanates from one who had not only studied but practised what he taught, and many know how great an effort he made as regards taking food, and how, if he had followed his own inclination, he would greatly have preferred fasting.

On Mortification in Food.

"There is nothing, perhaps, of equal importance in the spiritual life which is so little spoken of, and especially to women. Immortification in this respect is often the cause of the obstinacy of faults, otherwise very sincerely combated. Immortification is a greater danger for those with small appetites than for others. Those who eat much generally are those who gain most merit at meals. It is rare that a large appetite is appeased without an act of humility; very often a small appetite is a source of subtle self-complacency, more often by far than is recognized. Common mortification is practised by peremptorily rejecting all reflection or thought on food; by taking what comes indifferently; by leaving none. Special mortification is practised by the rejection or diminution of what gratifies most, and this always requires advice, or nearly always; and for most is inexpedient —amongst other reasons, because it entails thought.

The victims of immortification in this matter, who are most to be compassionated (and whose number is not small), are those whose health or habit of body causes all eating, or at least all eating of flesh meat, to be pleasureless or distasteful. In the purest spirit of the *agere contra*, of the Kingdom of Christ, to such it is mortification to eat; but it is rarely recognized, and unless perseveringly exercised, presently becomes intolerable. The consequence is the prevalence of that *low* health of which the *Imitation* says: 'Few are improved by sickness.' *Most* wise, *most* meritorious is the mortification of those who, being such, always eat as much as they can."

(To One in Delicate Health).

Penance.

"Nothing, of course, pleases the devil more than when he can drive a soul beyond her grace (which needs must be in cases of imprudence) in the matter of external austerity. Why? Because it must end in dejection to begin with (if that is not a bull), then she has to retrace her steps, and this is the matter in which it is most displeasing to retrace them, because it seems like giving up. What I should like you to do is to abandon all privation of *rest*. One of the men who made the long retreat with me had a bad back, and he used to find the colloquies too much for him; but he used to hold up his crucifix at our Lord and laugh, and the same with a little picture of our Lady. It answered very well, and I think the same might do in desolation

when one is against the wall. God bless you now; put your sorrows in the Crib, where I hope you will hear the word, by which, as the *Imitation* says: 'Jesus calls from tears to joy of spirit—happy hour!'"

A nun once said to him that she saw little good in making a slight use of instruments of penance, which gave so little pain. He replied: "Can anything be useless which is a *memoriale vitæ crucifixi*, when it is offered up as a memorial of our Lord's love and passion for us? when we say, 'I offer up and bear this pain, slight though it be, yet offer it up voluntarily in memory of Thee, who didst suffer so much and such great pain voluntarily for me.' Can that be useless? No!"

(To a Lady who had much Suffering to bear, and who was Devoted to Good Works).

Desolation.

"Well, He has given you an unmixed dose of bitterness this time, and so we must not mind some wry faces. It is curious to see how nature in all its phases is always true to itself. You in your desolation find that life has been a bad job—just as some poor Agnostic when comfortably convinced at last that he is only a machine, which is wound up at breakfast, lunch and dinner, cries out dismally, 'Life is not worth living.' You know better, thank God, and however hard to bear this long continued spiritual disgust, you do *believe* that it is a harvest time.

"*Pensa, filia, horum fructum laborum*, in the 49th chapter of the *Imitation*. 'Think of the fruit,' he says. I think you might lift your face higher yet, and think of the glory to *Him*. When He cries out so pathetically somewhere—'Where is there to be found one who will serve Me gratis?' well, you can answer now: 'True, Lord, I am even yet but a beginner, still half a hireling, and if I get no pay (and this is Thine own loving gift) I do not run away—do not turn to earth in preference to Thee; but Faith is dim, and courage and endurance are (or seem at least to be) so fine drawn that I tremble, and were it not for that grace of Thine, *which I think I have not*, what should I be? Oh, I must needs go and seek Thee in the Garden, and kneel down there beside Thee on the blood-bedabbled grass, and learn *whether there can be* a worthier service than to bear without consolation for the love and imitation of Thee.'"

. . . . . .

(To the Same.)

"I was ever so grateful for your notions about living and bearing where God's will puts you. The new-fashioned luxury of life has found that animal well-being is the *finis ultimus;* and even pious and good people drink in the dogma with most practical conviction, so it is a comfort to hear someone say they have got to live in a place that does not agree with them."

Father Dignam had a great devotion to his Guardian Angel. Once he wrote to his sister:

"My child, it has been impossible to write, but

I hope my dear Angel carried a message of blessing for me."

One of his spiritual children tells a pretty story about this Angel.

She was a chronic invalid unable to go out, and every Friday he used to bring her Holy Communion. One day he did not come. She knew he was very busy, and did not like to send a message, so she asked her Angel Guardian to remind *his Angel*. Very soon afterwards Father Dignam appeared with the Blessed Sacrament. A few days later he came to see her, and she told him what she had done. "Well, that *is* curious," he said, smiling; "I had quite forgotten you, and went to my room, when I heard a rustling in the corridor, but no one knocked. I opened the door and saw no one, but instantly your Communion flashed into my mind."

Father Dignam had a great devotion to the feast of Christmas. It was, after the feasts of the Sacred Heart and Annunciation, or as he loved to call the latter, the feast of the Incarnation, when the "Heart of Jesus began to beat," the day he most loved. He wanted to excite the devotion to the Sacred Infancy, and to lead the people to visit the Crib.

The S. M. G. nuns used to look up verses from some book or other bearing on the subject, and send these to him; then the Notre Dame nuns would copy them in beautiful hand-printing on a card, which the Father would hang up before the Crib. He was delighted to see the poor, oftentimes rough, grimy colliers, spelling the words out with

evident delight. He writes one Christmastide: "Those lines are delicious;" at another time, "Oh, your hymns have pleased me, each one more than the others, but I am not going to give them all at once. I have sent off one to be written, then in a while they shall have another. They are just the thing—instructive and devotional, simple, short—I could not wish for better." He had a great devotion to saying Midnight Mass, and he generally did so in the domestic chapel. On one occasion he was expecting a server from a house opposite the Fathers' residence, but this server never came. Father Dignam stood at the open door waiting. He could easily have crossed the road and called the young man, but he would not disturb the family, nor wake anyone else, and so gave up his great wish without a word.

One of his Christmas letters to a friend begins as follows:

A Christmas Carol.

In the early morning, early,
  Ere the dawn is even nigh,
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
  Glory be to God on high.
When the crown-like stars are shining,
  While the dew is on the sod,
Sing the Angels to the Shepherds,
  Sing the choristers of God.

From their lips the gladsome tidings
  Ring through Heaven's star-bound dome;
Peace to every yearning bosom,
  Peace to every Christian home.
Angel-songs breathed on the manger
  Come to hush our fears and sighs;
Wafted on the tide of ages,
  Their glad echo never dies.

"My bird sings, you see. But poetry for picture is a fair exchange. Yes, I wish you could be with us at the Crib. It was a curious sight on Christmas morning, for some good soul or other had piled up bread there, and there was a complete suit of baby's long clothes. The two together seemed to promote devotion amazingly, but I doubt not they were the source of much distraction."

To the late Superior of the Convent of Notre Dame, St. Helens, who had had to undergo a very terrible operation:

"December 23rd, 1885.

"MY DEAR CHILD,—Our Lord has indeed sent you a Christmas present then, a terrible one, one which I confess makes my heart ache. But none the less, I trust firmly that He will bring you through this pain, and give you to your children again well and strong. Your illness must necessarily chill their Christmas fun, and not a little. But if they offer that drawback with real loving submission to the Divine Will, it will make all more like what it was at Bethlehem, where the *cold wind came in* at a good many cracks, and yet did not kill the joy of that first and most joyous of all Christmastides. Now, I pray God to bless you all; I ask Him to make the most timid brave, the coldest fervent, the most anxious generous, and, above all, to make each and everyone of you love all the rest with a greater love than ever, and all for Him. May our dear Lady put her little Baby into the breast of each one to be nursed.

"I prayed our Lord for all of you during the Midnight Mass, and that none of the solicitudes of this life may lessen the great, great joy of this dear time."

(To his Sister.)

"I must own your letters please me more and more, though they remind me of the circular swoops of a pigeon before she sets off on her steady flight. Even the effort to be calm is the beginning of calmness. I like these beginnings of interest in God's larger affairs—your sorrow at the ingratitude of creatures, so much better than fussing and fuming, and groaning and fretting over some one perverse little soul whose hour is not come, and perhaps can never come till there has been the sin and the shame which, so often, alas! are the only roads to light and repentance. When I told you to lift your head above the waves it was not for yourself only.

. . . . . .

"I am truly glad that you are to be removed from office. I always think the only safe attitude at such times is to make sure that *nature loves power*, and that *nature is in me*, and so to take for granted that I shall be sorry to lose it, jealous of those who get it, sure to think them incapable, anxious to warn and advise them, and so to go against all these things in myself, *whether I see them or not*, tooth and nail. That is what I call practical politics. God bless you, my dearest."

. . . . . .

"Your letter is so full of genuine joy and gratitude, that our Lord must needs be pleased with it, though the marvellous facility with which you make me out Martyr, Confessor, Saint, Patriarch, Prophet, and Victim, must, I think, make Him laugh as He shakes His Head at the mean, shrivelled reality. Great graces you assuredly do obtain for me; but you really, my dear, form a most exalted idea of their effects. I felt very much ashamed of myself at Bruges, and found time to ask myself a great many times *how it could be*, with all the helps I had had, that the edification should be all on one side.[1] I do not know how we can be grateful enough for all the great heap of blessings so wonderfully gathered into a focus at that meeting."

Father Dignam had a great devotion to his Patron Saint, not only because he is the "Saint of the burning Heart," but also because he is one of the "penitent Saints." Once a friend tried to persuade him that his real patron must be St. Augustine of England, since he was born a short time before that Saint's feast in May. "No, no," he said, "the *penitent* Saint is mine." He had a great devotion to St. John Berchmans, and, on his first entrance into the Society, said he was "a little afraid" of St. Ignatius; but that passed away, and St. Ignatius, his holy Father, became dear indeed to him; he confided his sister, in a special manner, to the *care of St. Ignatius*. Among other saints, Blessed Margaret Mary held the first place,

[1] All the brothers and sisters who still remained to Father Dignam had met together at Bruges, and he had been there also.

not only because she was the chosen instrument to make known the devotion to the Sacred Heart, but also because the *style* of her sanctity was so congenial to him. She was so especially the saint of self-abjection, the hidden violet and daisy "in the garden of the Spouse;" while St. Gertrude and St. Teresa, to whom he had a special devotion, more resemble the rose and the lily. He had also a great devotion to St. Catherine of Siena.

To a Nun, S.M.G., whose Patron in Religion was St. Austin:

"St. Austin's Eve.

"I will tell you the most real thing I know. I learnt it from our common father (St. Austin). True love of Jesus Christ is the same thing as true interior self-contempt. If you wish to love Him, be true. He rewards sincerity with *things which lead to that self-contempt.* These are ever His Heart's most precious gifts. Those who accept them (how few they are!) love Him truly. God bless you."

He had also a great devotion to St. Mary Magdalen. In his scholastic days he wrote to his sister: "Haven't you got a Magdalen amongst you —no one to remind you of the Saint who, *par excellence*, 'loved much'?"

Then he writes to a nun: "It is quaint, but it has a very deep and beautiful meaning for you, this attraction to the saints in whose spirit there is so strong an analogy. Of blessed Magdalen and St. Agnes, it may be said that they verify the words:

> Mercy and truth have met together;
> Justice and peace have kissed each other.

And in the words they write under Magdalen's pictures: 'Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm,' is the thought echoed by almost everyone of St. Agnes' antiphons."

(To a Superior.)

"Feast of St. Austin.

"I thank you so much for your kind thoughtfulness—our patrons, assuredly, are not in vain, if mine reads to me so obvious and necessary a lesson, no one in all the calendar of the saints could more exactly offer to your heart the thought which will give strength to it than St. John of the Cross. You know, my child, that when he grew old in his work (he never grew old in age), God let him see, and let all his brethren think his work an utter failure; and he came to lie down in his cell for his last illness with everybody grumbling at him. I am not comparing him with you, nor his work with yours; but *this* there is that is alike in them: that after having laboured long for God, you are not tempted to self-complacency about it, nor is the flattery of your Sisters your greatest trial. Why not look up to God and lay it all down, with its ups and downs, its failures and its glories, at His feet, and trust and rest? You have, at the very least, spent a life in the WISH to give Him glory; and if that is not a matter for happiness and humblest thanksgiving, what can be? Don't fret about evils, physical or moral; but leave all to Him who can do all things and turn even evil to good. I wish you knew how sure I am that God is pleased with you, when you

drive the dark thoughts away. God bless you, my dear child."

Father Dignam was very large-minded in wishing his penitents to consult other priests when they could not have access to himself; though, of course, he objected to the evil practice of cross-direction, when a penitent consults a priest upon a point already settled with her director and then quotes that priest's advice as better than the one she has received. He writes to a penitent:

"You did, of course, quite right. To speak when God and your soul's need bid you to speak is what I should always wish a sincere soul to do. Only—as, perhaps, I have had occasion to say to you before—when people say what I don't say, what I say is the law, otherwise I am useless. But that you know already, and what you have done is exactly what I should have wished you to do."

Father Dignam was especially severe in direction to those who, he thought, were called to perfection, either by their state as Religious, in which they had bound themselves to "strive to attain perfection," or because God had so dealt with their souls, even though they were not in religion, and so lavished His graces on them that He demanded from them a correspondence with those graces.

Hence he was deeply grieved when he saw a soul of this kind paltering with evil or playing fast and loose with God's grace. "I am so unspeakably unhappy about you," he wrote in one of these cases. A penitent who had a hard struggle with him thus writes:

"He reminded me so much of some lines of Father Faber entitled 'Stern Friend':

> Thy words cut like knives through every sense,
> Making my heart to bleed.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Shrinking from that quick eye, which seemed to pierce
> The last thin veil of sin,
> I watched thee like an abject, guilty thing,
> And wept with shame and fear,
> Whilst thou didst lay thy hand on me and bring
> The gleaming cross more near.

How true also in my case is the description of the conquest, and how truly did he show me that

> I and my dreams must part,
> Part in the blood that flowed
> Where the stern cross ran deepest in my heart.

And now I have lost him who was my strength, my help, my guide. Without his help it is very lonely."

A well-loved child had a hard spiritual struggle to undergo, during which it seemed as if the tie between them would break; but when this was past, the sacrifice made and the bond stronger than ever, he said, "Jepthe lost *his* child, but God has given *mine* back to me."

It need hardly be said that Father Dignam set great value on the particular examen. He writes as follows:

(To A.)

"My dear Child in J. C.—A good deal of patient discrimination is required in the confessor, in order to judge whether a particular examen on

the presence of God is a practical means of progress. It is so commonly the refuge of the soul which is at a standstill, that zealous (and, as I think, mistaken) directors come to regard it as synonymous with no examen at all. The truth is very opposite to this: a soul which is in earnest and has come to a certain degree of self-knowledge and vigilance, may often achieve greater victories, and with far more peace and courage, by this practice than by aiming at them in a more directly contentious way. I would rather you followed the counsel given at the retreat, and without the need of any debate with a confessor, consider that the way to record victories, without which there is no progress (a rather exaggerated dictum) is to conscientiously persevere in your particular examen."

(To a Nun.)

"My Child,—I am glad that you mean to take up your particular examen again, for most certain it is that your place in Heaven depends upon that. It is not enough, you know, to recognize and deplore your inconstancy. There are *means* which honest people take for remedying it, but pride does not like them. If you want to persevere, here are the rules: 1. Before you make the sign of the Cross have the book in your hand—make it with the book, slowly, and in the presence of God. 2. Never begin the act of contrition till the figure or cypher is in the book. It is surprising how pride fights against these two rules, yet those who stick to them and love them as signs of their littleness grow to be humble and

become saints. You cannot have a better matter than this presence of God. Let it be in this way: in each temptation to be slothful, wilful, petulant, &c., at each bell or duty, say, 'He shall reign;' 'Thy kingdom come.' Say the same whenever you are walking by yourself, as along corridors, &c. This is to mean that in each thing He is to have His way, not you yours; He to have the preference, not self, which is His and your only enemy. Down with self, up with Jesus Christ. Resolve upon six times before dinner and six after, and mark omissions, but try and make it very, very often in the day. Do not give up, nor think it useless if you have nothing but O to mark; and if you fail to make the examen, leave the place unmarked. Send me the book *just as it is* before your next retreat."

The examen book was forwarded a few months later, and the Father wrote:

"Well, for a pickle like you, it is not a bad record, I confess. I am sincerely pleased to see it. While working at patience, don't give up the prayer: '*He shall* reign;' 'Thy kingdom come,' for His reign in your heart is overturned by nothing more surely than by wilful impatience. Ask, during your retreat, for courage, above all things, to cope with your own inconstancy, for if only you are true in beginning again promptly after a fall, without brooding, without sighing, without sulking, our Lady will gradually do everything for you, and I am glad to hope there is a great improvement already. God bless you, my dear child."

(To a Nun.)

"It is *useless* to make resolutions about getting up. There is only one way of correcting this fault. This is to go to bed *exactly*, neither before nor after, and this constantly, and then in the morning to DO it—well or ill—light or heavy—out with you. Think of it afterwards if you like; say you were rash, bemoan your fate; but *don't go back*. It takes two weeks to cure in bad cases. I hope you will grow in generosity and strength."

(To a Lady.)

"Getting up is a thing apart in the spiritual life, and a most important one. You are now in a position to understand why St. Vincent of Paul used to say: 'Sanctity meant going to bed in good time.' It is no use making resolutions about getting up; there is only one thing to do, *do it*. Resolutions may be most useful about getting all our spiritual duties over in good time, or what is more useful, to omit them if not done in proper time, also about going to bed sharp, but never about getting up."

Some of his children had unbounded confidence in his prayers and considered them little short of miraculous.

"One day," says J——, "I had a terribly swelled and sore throat, and yet I had on the next day, in the wintertime, to move into a new house, and I was quite unfit for this. He came to see me, was much concerned, and gave me his blessing.

Soon afterwards I found my throat well—the gathering did not break—it disappeared."

N—— was a novice with the S. M. G. nuns, and had an eruption on her head. Doctors were consulted and remedies tried, but all in vain, and the poor child was told she must leave, and was in great grief. Father Dignam came to give the retreat, and she went to him. "Why, you have been crying," said he. She told him her trouble, and he said:

"Don't give up hope; I will give you a big blessing," and he laid his hands upon her head, saying, "You shall not cry; you shall laugh."

From that very moment, in 1877, she was cured, and has never since had the slightest return of her malady.

CHAPTER IV.

Institute of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.

"I have you in my heart—and this I pray that your charity may abound in knowledge and all understanding, that you may approve the better things. I admonish you as my dearest children."

Father Dignam rendered such valuable services to one religious Institute that it owes to him a deep and everlasting debt of gratitude. He first came in contact with the Institute of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God in 1873, and he soon took it into his heart, and it became from henceforth the object of his unceasing care and labour, all being done of course with the sanction of his Superiors. The Institute had only then been three or four years in existence, and Father Clare, S.J., who up to now had been its chief guide and helper, was about to be removed from London. It was surrounded not only with the difficulties incidental to all Religious Orders at their birth, but with peculiar ones of its own, so that at times it seemed marvellous how it could continue to exist. Father Dignam's advent was considered as a special sign of God's providence, and therefore the Sisters look on him as their Father, almost in the same way as the Nuns of the Sacred

Heart regard Père Varin, or the Sisters of St. Joseph Père Medaille, and many others in similar cases. The Sisters always remember, with thankful joy, that the day on which they were first inspired to seek that aid was on the feast of Our Lady of Dolours. Father Dignam was attracted by the scope and end of the Congregation—its special end being to honour the Sacred Heart of the Word Incarnate when It began to beat within the breast of His Holy Mother—serve and imitate our Lady—strive to gain souls for God everywhere, and serve the poor. The way in which they worked out this end brought about much misconception and a good share of contempt; and in the beginning Father Dignam was glad of this.

These Sisters, instead of depending wholly on alms or dowries, undertake certain industrial works, which aid in supporting their houses and works of charity.

The one point he was anxious about was the religious formation of the first Superiors and Sisters, in order that the spirit of the Institute might be thoroughly grafted in them. "It matters little what they *do*," he would say—"it matters a great deal what they *are*."

The development of the Congregation, its works of charity, its extension into different dioceses, might, he thought, all be safely left to develop in time. What he wanted was to make the Sisters REAL NUNS; they were to become true Religious; and, moreover, he strongly held the view that it gives God more glory to bring one soul nearer per-

fection than to train many to a lower standard. This was the task, then, that he undertook.

He gave the community a retreat in 1875; a triduum and also a retreat in 1876. In 1877 he gave two retreats, one for the professed and one for the novices, which latter was attended by those who could not be spared for the first retreat. He continued to give these double retreats from 1877 to 1882 inclusive: in all, fourteen retreats and one triduum. In this manner, he saw every Sister of the Congregation at least once a year. Every detail of the various houses—occupations, works of zeal and charity—came under his notice. No important step or decision was ever taken without his advice, and the whole Congregation had unbounded confidence in him. He kept up a constant correspondence with the Mother-General, and often with individual Sisters. Every letter has been preserved, and now that they have been counted and re-read, their number astonishes even the Sisters themselves, as well as the minute care and interest which they display. Truly their sorrows and joys were made his also. A few of the letters, or extracts from them, will be given to show in what manner he directed and formed and guided these Sisters.

He trained them according to the spirit of St. Ignatius, and, indeed, he could teach no other, for love and veneration for St. Ignatius was part of his being. Up to this time the Sisters were following a modified Rule of St. Ignatius, or an abridged form furnished them by Father Clare. Father Dignam wrote their Custom Book during the

retreats, and taught them various customs used by the Jesuits, though he never let them adopt anything merely because it was in Jesuit Rules or Customs, if it were not perfectly suited for women. During the retreats, or at their close, the elder Sisters were always gathered together for consultation on community affairs, and thus he helped to form the local Superiors to their duties. No detail was too small to excite his interest, but the points he was specially careful about were obedience, poverty, great charity, and courtesy. He said he could not bear to have visitors keep waiting at the door, or in the parlour. He was very stringent on the matter of letter-writing, and laid special stress upon the care which nuns should take upon this point. He had the greatest horror of gossip in convents, and told the Sisters when visitors were gossiping not to be afraid, in a gentle and modest manner to rise and end the conversation, and especially disliked much talking about priests, even in their praise, as it invariably led to gossip; so that it became a custom in the community to avoid mentioning priests without necessity. All criticism or censure of priests he looked upon with abhorrence as either a sin or sure to lead to sin. He insisted much on avoiding all spirit of depreciation of the good works of others, and was especially anxious that one religious community should never speak against, or make light of another, still less ridicule it. Indeed, he had the greatest horror of the habit which so largely prevails, even among Catholics, of ridiculing good works. He said to

the Superior, with great sadness in his look and manner, that it was an immense evil in England, and had shipwrecked many pious enterprises, and doubtless caused harm to souls.

The Sisters of the Institute are at the end of their two years' novitiate admitted to annual vows; at the end of seven years they take perpetual vows, having previously made a year's tertianship, according to the Jesuit Rule, during which St. Ignatius directs "the Religious to exercise himself in *schola affectus*" (the school of the heart) a beautiful expression denoting the object of this last trial. He shall practise, continues St. Ignatius, self-denial and humility, renouncing all merely natural inclinations, and advancing in the love of God.[1]

Father Dignam was most earnest in impressing on the Sisters that their first vows are their consecration to God; since nothing but their own will can ever again separate them from our Lord. It was a question at first whether this last probation should be made among the novices or separately. Father Dignam decided that at least during the early days of the Institute it should be made in the noviceship, and he wrote thus on the subject to the Superior:

"As I hope those who are preparing for probation will be animated by only one desire during the third probation, that is, to be the last and least of all, I do not hesitate to let them join the novices in everything. By-and-by we shall see if I have trusted them too much, but I am not afraid of it."

[1] *The Jesuits, their Foundation and History.*

It must not, however, be understood that Father Dignam *governed* the Institute. He left the Superiors perfectly free to adopt his advice or reject it. He always told them that God gave *them* light and the *grace d'etat*. All that he did was to teach and to counsel.

All the letters addressed to this community are entitled S.M.G.

(To the Mother General, S.M.G.)

"You may go to the chapel (at night) if you will only be wise about it, you know I do not object to an extra Communion on an extraordinary occasion; I will say Mass for you to-morrow, and wish you, with all my heart, the graces that will make you all I wish you to be. With patience and courage you will do all.

"When you go to your prayers, humble yourself to begin with, and you cannot do that too heartily; but you are not to stop there. Our Lord says, *Sursum corda*, and it is pusillanimity and not humility to forget it. Say to Him, 'You have given me this to do—me whom You know so well; these are my needs; grant me what I want—patience in failure, above all.' Don't believe yourself in disgrace after you have been sorry, for that is the devil's advice. God says, 'Trust and rest.' God bless you, my dear child."

(To the Same.)

"Don't act impulsively. It may be only a ruse of the devil. If she is capable of *understanding*

obedience, don't let the other temptations make you send her away without a trial. Weigh her brains and will, and then act accordingly."

(To the Same.)

"Don't be surprised at this universal crash of misfortunes all at once; it is no bad sign; and if you can but maintain your courage, you will look back on it afterwards with consolation. You must act for the best, and you need not fear my disapproving; it is a time of moral trial for them all. You must not *expect* them *all* to be capable of realizing your troubles; this is always the case in communities under trials of this kind. But God sees it all, and will not withdraw His hand if you call on Him and keep (I say it again) your head as calm as you can. God bless you, and make you strong and generous in the hour of your need."

. . . . . .

(To the Same.)

"Now more than ever you must remember that *results are nothing to you.* One result, at least, is coming out of it—it is making you a better nun. Do, then, what in you lies, and leave the rest to God. He will provide. Your part is to plant the dry sticks and leave the miracle to God. Courage, then, and God bless you."

(To the Same.)

"You would be very, very wrong to let your present immense difficulties abate your confidence.

It is so, exactly so, that God tries the work which He blesses, and where are you to get your merits from, if it be not from fortitude and constancy at such times as this?

"God knows all about it. He can do all things. The work is His. What have you to fear? Suffer, then, but hope unchangeably; He will do the rest. Even if He willed to make you like Himself, and to let you die amidst what seemed the ruins of the work of your life, after your Good Friday would come its Pentecost."

(To the Same.)

"Let well alone. If his Lordship does more than express regret, tell him you will do anything he likes, *when you have formed your people*. It is not only the right thing, but will commend itself to his judgment no less than to mine and yours. *Buckle to at the novices*."

. . . . . .

To the same, when a Sister, on whom much depended, was dying:

"Certainly there is no exaggeration. Your troubles are indeed terrible, and, God apart, unendurable; neither one nor the other, if you trust in Him, and are seeking His will, and that alone. Shall not my soul be *subject* to *God? There* is strength enough to carry ten times as many crosses as He wills to heap on you; but don't hope to carry them of your own strength.

"The present time of agony may bring much light, but I do not think it is a time to act. Let

your strength be in the thought that what God has given you to do, He Himself will accomplish."

(To the Same.)

"Remorse, self-reproach, do come from the devil, as long as there is a little of bitterness in them, for the bitterness is all self, all pride detestable to God. Hell is full of such self-reproach, but, mark, every soul, perhaps, in Heaven too, *could* have it (except our Lady) for all they had not done, but that their conformity to God's will and profound sense of their own nothingness makes it impossible, and merges all in one grand feeling of gratitude and joy. Well, this applies to earth, to religion, just as truly; *bitter* remorse would be out of place in a truly humbled soul. God wants you to do His work, not yours, by His means, not yours. He will baffle every plan, take away every consolation, till you are like wax in His Hands. When He can have His own way with you, then He will do all. Why, then, fix your hopes, or your strength, or your will, on any one creature? God will not let you, be sure of it. You must empty yourself of yourself if you are to be capable of being His instrument. Make no bargains with Him—offer all, give all heartily; then you need have no remorse nor dread of the future.

. . . . . .

"Be sure that whether He takes her away or leaves her to you, it will be a source of blessing to the Congregation. In itself it is an inestimable blessing to die in God's hour, with a will united to His. I could not conceive, without repugnance, that our Lord clung to life."

(To the Same.)

"You must above all try to repel depression by thanksgiving. You have so much reason; for Almighty God has worked wonders of grace for you, such as are rare indeed. I would not let any fear nor any perplexity come about these thoughts which afflict you, but be satisfied with doing what you can at the time, and afterwards cast it all aside, without examination, into the mercy of God. Be frank with Him and you need not have any scruples. I wish you the Christmas which God Himself wishes you—one of peace under the cross, peace in the strong sense that He has laid it on you, and He alone can give you strength to carry it, and that you, with inviolable constancy, will do His will. *Ecce ancilla!*

"God bless you, my dear child.

"I wish every best and brightest Christmas blessing to all the children of the Institute."

(To the Same.)

"That is what I call an encouraging letter—plenty of crosses, and plenty of pluck—that is just what Almighty God likes. Go on that way and you will do."

(To the Same.)

"Holy Cross,

"October 1st, 1883.

"I introduced Father Ramière to two of the Sisters, whom we met accidentally, and he spoke with much edification of their demeanour and the calm happiness on their faces, *which we have so much wished to see.*"

(To a Sister S.M.G.)

"My dear Child in J.C.,—Such a letter must be to me an occasion of great thanksgiving to our Blessed Lady, not only on your own account, but for the sake also of your mother and the Institute. It means, we may well hope, the end of your baby-hood, the beginning of the life which, whether in sunshine or shade, in calm or in tempest, shall be steadfastly given to God without one deliberate look back to nature or self. Only God Himself could have done this, could have enabled you so accurately to see the points on which He asked special self-renunciation; the places where weakness still shows itself, and the true value of the means. Others may speak, but only He can inwardly enlighten. Now, child, pray for constancy, for you are too wise by this time to flatter yourself that the fruits of so great a grace are to be gathered without labour. Never, perhaps, does the devil more resolutely gird himself to a long battle than when he sees a Religious resolve in earnest as to points, preludes, and examens; he knows that if he is conquered there his power is gone, and the agony of the anticipated defeat makes him strive as in desperation. One of the best Religious I ever directed spent two years of hard work over the second of the ten Additions. So, too, with your work as a Council Sister. I would have you *never* be without self-distrust. When we show our love for the Institute, and the sincerity of our desires to seek its good, we are easily, easily beguiled to

believe our intentions pure, and that we are free from passion and respect of persons; when, if we did but labour and humble ourselves, God would give us quite other lights, and I do not say this for *now*, when all is fair, but for all your life. You will be a saint when your thoughts of others are thoughts of esteem. God will love you then indeed. God bless you, my dear child; may He perfect in you what He has begun."

(To the Same.)

"Now your mother tells me that you have boiled over again. You will be emptying the kettle some day in one of these crises, if you don't mind what I tell you. Even with all you have to do and think about, if you would only watch your nerves and keep them quiet inside, you would wear. I think, indeed, you have learnt a little of it or you would have been down before. But when everything that is inside begins to give little jumps, there is nothing for it but to sit down and be absolutely quiet for twenty good minutes, mind and body alike. Sitting down is better even than lying down at such times, if only you do nothing. But if when jumps begin you take no notice of them, and go on steaming, a crash is bound to follow, as you have discovered. The crosses and troubles have been coming thick lately. Well, that is what you have always to be prepared for, and you have, thank God, the secret of peace within you. There is nothing to be added to it, and so long as you keep steadfast, as I am sure you will, even boiling over

will not disturb you *there*. But you must honestly make it a matter of conscience to guard your physical strength—for your mother's sake, for the Institute, for our Lady's good service, for the interest of the Sacred Heart."

(To an Assistant General.)

"Notice, my child, that this paper is neither a careful nor a thoughtful one. It is very idly written also, which you never ought to allow either in yourself, or in anyone subject to you. Good nuns are always distinguished by careful writing, which is also a mark of humility.

"The art of correction is the most difficult of all to teach—perhaps, the most valuable thoughts on the subject which I can give you are these two: A good rule for reproving is always to answer to myself this question first—'Have I good reason to believe that what I am going to say will do her good?' The other is to remember that if every occasion to encourage is used, there will be but little need of using occasion to reprove."

(To the Same.)

"Your letter is one to make me thank God rather than write to you. It is a great pleasure to see the Sisters write to you with so much ease, and ought to be a great help to you in forming them. You have a million difficulties to face, therefore do what you are now doing thoroughly, and trust to God and our Lady for all the rest. God bless and

guard you, my dear child, and give you every grace you need at the hour you need it.

. . . . . .

"It is a great consolation to me to read your account of the houses, and as to C——'s story, it reads like a comical history of one of God's sparrows on the roof, and the child's fun is just the best spirit under the circumstances."

. . . . . .

(To the Same when under Great Trouble.)

"If it is for God and our Lady's sake you are so sad, they are perfectly well able to look after their own affairs without us; and if it is for your own sake, it is the way neither to peace nor to merit. It is not in that way that God's work is done. Now brush it all away and be heartily ashamed of it. Be true and constant. God bless you."

. . . . . .

(To the Same in Reply to her Answer to the Preceding Letter.)

"*That* is right. Fortitude *in the hour* is the only true proof of trust and sincerity, and you will be far more *evenly* happy when nothing less than this is what you are resolved upon. God bless you, my child."

. . . . . .

(To the Same when Suffering from Illness.)

"Your question is a rather comical one. It is fundamental, you know, that what we cannot do

our Lord is pleased at our omitting. He praised St. Gertrude for saying, 'Now I must go to sleep, for I am too tired to talk to You.' Father Law shook his crucifix at Him, instead of a colloquy. When you are sick He is quite content with good will. God bless you."

(To a Sister S.M.G.)

"Your letter pleases me very much, for you have wisely conquered the desire to defend yourself; and as for the one little bit of self-love which made you throw in the word 'exaggeration,' I can easily forgive it. I do not expect you to be quite a saint just yet. I do not mean that there has been no exaggeration, but that if you had been a saint, you would have left that to me. I am very glad that your eyes are open to the danger of your present charge, for overwork is an evil even when imposed by obedience and unavoidable, as it is in your case. But there is in this, as in everything, a wrong way of using the creature and a right one. The wrong way is by grumbling at it, by excusing my faults to myself on account of it, and by clinging to little bits which I, perhaps, could get rid of, because I like them. The right way is by accepting it with hearty good will and confidence, because it is God's will, by extra watchfulness over myself because of the danger, and, I think, by a particular examen on not losing the little bits of time between, and giving *full* time to each spiritual duty, except when necessity, or obedience, or charity prevent. God often allows overworked Religious to lose fervour, but

it is because they like the disorder which it causes, and make a pretext of it.

"No one is safer than such a one if she is aware of the danger, and, therefore, humble and watchful, and of good will. God will take care of you, my dear child, and for goodness' sake do not speculate whether you are in the degree of perfection which God wants, for that is only self-love and the way to temptation; but do what you know, and leave the rest to Him. God bless you."

(To B——, who was about Entering the Institute of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.)

"Holy Cross,
"May 29th.

"My dear Child in J.C.,—Your little letter made me very happy about you. Though it was pretty clear which way the Spirit of God was leading you, it is, nevertheless, the greatest consolation to me that the painful and laborious search after the Divine Will has not been shortened. God's grace, which has lighted up in your heart so true a desire of serving Him perfectly, will not fail you in the hard moments of your trial; and one grace above all will, I trust, have been perfectly acquired while you are still in the world—that of treating your scruples with contempt. I will pray for you, my dear child, very sincerely. I greatly hope that our dear Lady will be content with nothing less in you than a very holy and very useful little servant,

and that she will light up a life-long sunlight in your heart, to make you what alone God loves—a cheerful giver.

"Ever in J.C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

(TO THE SAME, AFTER SHE HAD MADE HER VOWS.)

"MY DEAR CHILD IN J.C.,—I was very, very sorry to let the happy day pass without a word from me; but I could not help myself. Prayers, however, are better than good wishes. You have had a famous opportunity of practising my lesson, and I shall be most interested in hearing some day how the battle has been waged. Enough for the time to know gratefully that our Lord has taken you, and made you His own. I have no fear of your failing in the cheerfulness of your gift *now*—the rub is not yet—though you may think it hot enough at times. By-and-by, when our Lord lays the crosses on from outside, then will be the time when I shall want you to lift your face to Him and smile, and say, like St. Francis Xavier: '*Amplius, Domine!*' and I think you will do it too. If you are hearty and thorough about what I told you last time, He will not be stingy in His graces; and, dear Lord, it is easy to trust Him, and easy to bear much when one loves Him. There is *no one* and *nothing* else. May His best blessing fill you, my dear child.

"Ever in J.C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

(To the Local Superior, S.M.G., at St. Helens.)

"Holy Cross,

"October 24, 1882.

"I quite forgot to tell you that you are to give an extra Communion to the Sisters for the health of your mother and Mother A. A. It ought to have been on Monday, which was the end of the Novena which they have been making; but take the first free day. Mind it is not that they are not getting well, for they are, I trust, but to make them quite well.

"Ever in J.C.,

"A. Dignam, S.J."

(To the Mother General, S.M.G., after the Clothing of her Second Niece.)

"Holy Cross.

"Your niece's Clothing is an infinite consolation. I wish her the full measure of the spirit of her blessed vocation. May she inhale and *exhale* all the days of her life the love of lowly labour for our dear Lady's honour; and if she has that in her, God will give her great work to do."

(To the Same.)

"You have, indeed, reason to be glad and grateful for the work the children have done here,[1] which is quite singularly blessed, and to be, I hope, if only nursed a little wisely, the beginning of an influence and a power almost unique."

[1] At St. Helens, Lancashire.

(ADVICE GIVEN TO VARIOUS SISTERS AMONG THE S.M.G. NUNS.)

1. "He once said to me: 'A., your vocation is as true as if two Angels from Heaven came to tell you so.'"

2. "The last time I saw him at St. Helens he said: 'Wonders will never cease now you are made a local Superior;' and he called one of my troubles 'a cross with spikes.'"

3. "When I told him of crosses and difficulties, he said: 'Take them; they are good for you, and leave the rest. Don't worry, trying to do or undo what you can't help. Good will come out of every trial in the end.'"

4. "Don't think you can give less glory to God and in our Lady's service in these busy early days of the Institute than nuns in grand convents where all is in perfect order."

5. "When you commit a fault say to our Lord: 'I am sorry for Thee, but glad for me. Sorry because it offends Thee, but glad because it humbles me.'"

6. "If you are sad, you cannot have true contrition."

7. "Preserve the memory of your sins as 'a bundle of myrrh between your breasts,' ever to remind you of what you have done."

8. "When God seems to leave you and you don't know what to do, get a string and catch one end of it, and our Lady will catch the other end, and let her draw you along."

9. "Don't think of what you will do or how you will act when the cross comes. Our Lady won't let you be weak. If you are wise, you will look on it as a mercy rather than a cross. You can do it, but only in the spirit of a penitent sinner. If you do it from any other motive, you will fail."

10. "I never spoke to him without feeling the effects of his words wonderfully. I was always joyful and happy, and I often thought it such a privilege to be in the Institute of which he was the Father, and that it was enough to help any nun through her whole life to have had one or two talks with him."

11. "I remember his words in April, 1884. He said I was to ask myself these questions: 'Am I a means of sanctity to the house in which I dwell? Am I a means of peace to others? Do I each day try to promote God's glory?'"

12. "Keep as far as you can in holy indifference concerning the phases through which it may please the Divine Goodness to let your soul pass, even if it be to leave you without sensible feeling whether you are doing well or not.

"All grace is efficacious in itself and in God's intention; no grace is so efficacious as to force the will."

13. "As long as you are honestly aiming at self-forgetfulness, you are sure to have of *His very best*."

14. "You are indifferent to some extent. This is true, thank God, and yet means much; not only indifference as to charges, but at any moment

to be able to look at God and say, 'Not me but Thee.'"

15. "Spiritual duties are the true points to be solicitous about. Try in the act of contrition not to be satisfied without feeling sorrow, and dwell a little on each motive—fear, shame, and *His love*."

16. "The monthly review is essential for growth.

"Your particular examen should be not to dwell on what gives pain. A vital lesson. This freedom from brooding is very closely connected with habitual esteem for others."

17. "Is it right to go straight to our Lord and dwell with Him till trouble of all kind passes away? Yes, only remember it is a great grace which deliberate infidelity might lessen or even take away."

18. "Our Lord is now impassible and incapable of suffering, but at the time of His Passion He foreknew and suffered everything that every creature would do or say against Him, and also He foresaw and received every reparation and consolation from every act that those who love Him would do, and the best way for our own devotion is to think when we are doing things, that He is really suffering now and being pleased now, because a mind living in time cannot comprehend the Eternal Mind to whom all things are as it were present."

19. "We are not allowed to say that any individual soul is in Hell, and no one ever went to Hell who did not deliberately say first: 'We will not have this Man to reign over us,' that is its own

free choice, that is what sin leads to. Multitudes die and are saved, and no one knows anything about them except their bad lives in this world. We know nothing whatever of the number of the elect, although many theologians hold that they are few. God knew that it would always be a trial to the faith of His children to see the apparent triumph of the wicked in this world, but He is still Master in His own way, although evil seems to triumph, and in His own time and in His own way He will bring everything under the Feet of Christ. Evil of its own nature is always more apparent than good; the good that is done is for the most part done in secret. We cannot see visibly the fruits of the daily Sacrifice of the Mass. Rest assured the interests of souls are safe in God's hands."

The Sisters of the Institute were accustomed to send Father Dignam a New Year's offering of a "spiritual bouquet," or a list of Masses to be heard, Holy Communions offered, as well as prayers and Rosaries, for his intention. Few things gave him more pleasure than to know that prayers were rising up for him and his work. He wrote to the Mother General on January 1st, 1877:

"I prize the offering of your children so very, very much. Tell them I am grateful indeed for their prayers, *so* grateful that there is only one thing I value more, and that is their *conquering themselves*, and that, I know, will not be wanting. May God and our Lady bless them, and give them a happy and a fruitful year, rich in progress which none shall see but you and I."

(To the Same.)

"A word at least of thanks and blessing. Your precious gift is very dear to me, and, as all the children know, I trust more in their prayers than others, because I know that they come from hearts which are fighting the battle against self, and letting no created thing stand between them and our Lord's love. God grant you and all your children the plenitude of the spirit of your vocation, the simple, joyous love of Jesus and Mary, and alacrity to work, and when He pleases, for His love to suffer too. May your Christmastide and your New Year be happy with the best of earthly happiness—hearts at peace."

(Another Year.)

"Your bouquet from the children is a most precious one, and I am ever so touched and grateful. I think the year has indeed been one of blessings and growth for the Institute, and that we none of us can feel too full of trust, that our Lady will finish what she has so lovingly begun; nor, on the other hand, can we be too patient when the beginnings (and our whole life is a life of many beginnings) are difficult and slow."

(Another Year.)

"I have never thanked you as I ought for the beautiful New Year's gift of prayers and Communions. I keep the list before me to give me courage. It is a joy to me that A. A. gives you so much consolation, and a still greater one how hard

she tries to be in everything true to God. She will need fortitude, and without *that*, there is nothing to be got."

(ANOTHER YEAR.)

"I have a lovely spiritual bouquet from Brentford this morning, to my great delight. I hope the children's charity will bring down immense graces upon them as well as upon me, and you will find a grand and glorious spirit of charity and fervour in their hearts this year."

(ANOTHER YEAR.)

"Thank God for your prayers on New Year's Day. I lean upon them and rejoice in them, and am sure God rewards the great charity which gives me this blessed alms."

(TO THE SAME.)

"MY DEAR CHILD IN J.C.,—At last I am able to steal a moment to thank you and your children for so acceptable and precious an offering. Tell them I am grateful for their Masses and Communions and beads, because they help me to *help others*, but that even that does not satisfy me. My own reward can only be in the fidelity of their own lives—in carrying into practice what I have taught them—by mortifying their carelessness and doing their duties with exactness and perfection; whenever they forget I lose by it; and so I hope they will try hard, and may our dear Lord bless them all and you at their head."

(To the Same.)

"I should have sent at least a card of gratitude, but I was obliged to make poor Sister Superior here my scapegoat and cast the burden upon her. I feel all the more guilty as the burden of my song to the Sisters is always gratitude—gratitude as the supreme remedy for all the ills of Religion.

. . . . . .

"I was so pleased with the children[1] yesterday —such consolation it gave me to find them all in such cheerful and sensible dispositions. I go to my retreat on Saturday, so you will know that all contributions are thankfully received."

(To the Same, after a Trial.)

"If your children are to do great things for the Sacred Heart in London you must not be cast down by difficulties. They are the *harrow* over the seed. Prayer can do all things; trust and be true, and God and our Lady will bless it."

Father Dignam invariably paid a visit to the Sisters at St. Helens on Christmas Day. Writing to the Mother General on December 27, 1891, he says: "I was, I cannot say how much, pleased with Sister D—— and her Sisters on Friday. She seemed to me admirable, and I was glad to hear that they wrote in excellent spirits from Liverpool. God bless your coming year with great blessings."

[1] Sisters at St. Helens.

(To the Same.)

"I wish you and your children the choicest graces from the Crib—real poverty, real goodwill to bear hardships, above all, real love of that dear Lord who is all in all to you and to me, now and for ever. I have had a great joy this morning; one of the young officers at Folkestone, whom I went to see when I left you at M——, is received to-day. He leaves for India on Wednesday. This has been done without any instruction, by simply going to Mass."

(To the Same.)

"My dear Child in J.C.—Your children's bounty has given me great delight. I prize their prayers so much, and I feel so very keenly how great my need is and how much they help to put solid fruit into all my work. What, indeed, could I do without them? Thank the dear children, then, for me, and remind them that they have every day their place in my Mass, when I ask our Lord to fill them with the perfect spirit of their vocation and make them correspond to it well."

(To a Mother Assistant by whom the New Year's Offering had been sent.)

"January 2, 1889.

"My dear Child in J.C.—So many letters and so many gifts surely deserve a long answer and many thanks. And they shall have them, though now I cannot write. I am beginning to fear I shall

have to write *an encyclical!* However, for the moment, I trust they will forgive a short word. Tell them all I thank them and I bless them, and I hope for each and every Sister of the Institute a great and most special gift of love and generosity right out of our Lady's heart. Tell M. Ph. (Novice Mistress) to make a little cross on the forehead of each of the children and say I sent it to them."

(To the Same, another Year.)

"I have had many cards and many presents and many wishes, but your card, your present, and your wishes (for prayers are the best of wishes) are much the most precious to me.

"And then I know that God rewards charity doubly when it is given to the necessitous, and as I in very truth am in very great necessity, I think your kind prayers will bring great blessings on you and on all the children. And I told your Mother heartily in my letter to-day that I was sure she would find that a great extra grace had been given to them all—a grace of mutual affection and love of their vocation above everything else on earth, had been given to all the Sisters because of their charity to poor me.

"God bless you, my dear child. Every happiness and grace for the new year to you and to all."

At one time a Missionary Bishop happened to visit the Convent of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God at Roehampton, and immediately

expressed a wish to have a branch house in his diocese; he said that the union of mission and industrial work which this Institute carried out would meet a great want in his diocese. Father Weld wrote on the same subject to the Superior, and when she replied that she did not see her way at present to undertake foreign missions, the Father wrote back that there was no immediate hurry in the matter. This was communicated to Father Dignam, who replied:

"I do beg of you not to be run away with by Father Weld's[1] seeming prudence — he knows nothing at all about it from your point of view, and his ideas of delay are a snare, because it supposes that you should in some way bind yourself to the Bishop for some future time, which, in my judgment, it would be most injudicious to do. Every Sister you sent out would of necessity be one whom for a long time you will not be able to spare. Father Weld is considering the mission, not you; and you cannot afford to do that. The impression you make at the present stage of development is never worth much, either for good or bad. A Bishop goes to Roehampton and immediately thinks he has evidence that you are a well-trained body — just what he wants. A priest hears something against you, and turns up his eyes and hands for ever afterwards; but none of these impressions are worth a rush — the truth is a good and consoling and solid truth. What is the truth? That God is doing His own little work in His own dear

[1] Father Alfred Weld, S.J., then on the Zambesi Mission.

way — not by giving you saints, no, nor geniuses, but by letting religious life tell upon the very people for whom He created the Institute, until what was impossible becomes possible, what was but possible becomes a matter of fervent hope and astonishment, and the 'What God has begun may He finish,' which is said to your novices (at the Clothing ceremony), a prayer that will at last be heard. But, my child, we are not going, please, to send possibilities or probabilities away from formation, and we must form many thoroughly before foreign missions can be thought of."

Later on another Missionary Bishop expressed a strong wish to have the Sisters in his diocese, and when he was refused, Father Dignam was delighted.

He wrote: "Foreign missions must inevitably come at last; but I think we are not ripe for them yet. You would have to denude yourself of your very best Superiors to keep the spirit and the love of the Institute alive. I would not send Sisters to (——), no, not to convert the whole place."

At one time, when Father Dignam's health was much broken down, the Mother General wrote to him that she feared his labours for the Institute had tended to bring about this result. He replied:

"You are not to think of things in that way at all. I thank God with very great gratitude for all that He is doing for you, and for having deigned to let me be some help in His work, and I have great confidence that He will finish what He has begun."

Father Dignam did not like the Sisters to undertake any industrial work unaccompanied by some work of charity, and when an offer of this kind, which presented many advantages, was made to the Sisters, and he was, as usual, consulted, he replied:

"You know the feeling which made me so glad to see you rid of (——). If you had anything to do with the parish, so that their work was only an item in yours, it might be all different. If you make a mistake, let it this time be by refusing a good thing, rather than accepting a bad. A mistake would be a very serious mistake indeed. God bless you."

At one time the Mother General thought that, on account of her failing health, it would be better for her to resign her office, and she laid her reasons before him. He replied, "I have tried to give fullest weight to all the points you sent to me in favour of resignation, but I really believe there is not a solid word to be said for it. Pray think no more of it, for it is a whisper of the devil to the weary to rest before the goal is attained. God bless you, my most dear child."

In reply to an answer to the preceding, he wrote: "My dear child, I thank you deeply and tenderly for your letter, which I am sure cost you the dismissal of a vision of rest. *Be patient*, child. God bless you in heart and soul and body, in every step of your way.

. . . . . .

"The finger of God, no doubt, is everywhere, in

every heart, and in every subtlest intrigue, if we only knew it; but assuredly it makes its mark on the Institute and poor (——), is to obtain you the needed help from the Cardinal. God bless you, my child, keep close to God. *Do.* There is no one else who can help us at last, no, nor even now.

. . . . . .

"I do not in the least know what your trouble is about those who have gone. Anything in that regard, of course, makes me a little more anxious than other matters do. No matter, *underneath are the everlasting arms*, and you are safe in them. God bless you with His best and kindest blessing, my dear child."

. . . . . .

After a great disappointment in not seeing him owing to his illness, he wrote, "I need not ask you to pray for me, but I need to tell you how deeply I felt your self-denial at St. Helens for my benefit. I shall never forget that."

From his first acquaintance with the Institute of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, Father Dignam interested himself about the Constitutions which it was necessary to draw up before seeking any approbation from Rome. A mass of papers written at different times during some years show the pains he spent on this. He also read the Rules of other Orders and various books on the subject; among others, he studied the work of Abbé Craisson, which is so valuable, as it gives the different decrees of the Holy See on the subject of religious communities of women, and he consulted other

Fathers, especially Father George Porter, S.J. (late Archbishop of Bombay), and Father Morris, S.J.

Towards the end of 1878, the matter became pressing, as it was decided that in the beginning of 1879 the Mother General and a companion should proceed to Rome to ask for the *Lauda* or Brief of Praise, which precedes by some years any formal approbation. There were many consultations, therefore, during the two retreats of 1878, and then as soon as he was free, Father Dignam shut himself up to finish his work.

(To the Mother General.)

"I am getting on. I must depend entirely on prayers. I found the Index a very hard job; but that done, it is but writing on steadily. Just received your letter. I wish you would consult Father Porter (on these temporal matters), his opinion is better than mine. I shall be quite contented for you to follow his opinion."

(To the Same.)

"Father Provincial[1] has freed me as far as possible from local work. You, of course, will have many alterations to suggest; most likely when the MS. is submitted to Father Morris or some other canonist, there will be suggestions and corrections from another point of view. Even if

[1] Father Jones, to whom this Institute owes an everlasting debt of gratitude, was elected English Assistant to the present Father General in December, 1892. Shortly afterwards he died at Loyola, where the General Congregation had been held.

you don't send me a word of what you write, writing will clarify your ideas more than you imagine. If you have a question to ask, write it down; if a suggestion to make, write it first."

(To the Same.)

"I am sorry you have had no more copy yet. I *hope* by Christmas Day to be able to send you the rest, with the one great exception of the last chapter, which I have not been able to attack yet. We are full of sickness and distress here, and I have been busy at the town hall and talking to town councillors in a way they are not at all used to—to make them understand the difference between relieving distress and talking about it. But now shall I send the whole as far as we have it to Father Morris, or only so far as you have seen it? I hope to have a copy for him on Christmas Day.

. . . . . .

"You are quite right about the teaching clause, not only must it be settled *how* it is to be, but *what*. Keep a memorandum of it for future discussion."

(To the Same.)

"Holy Cross,

"December 27, 1878.

"Tell them all I prayed for them in my Midnight Mass. If they ever mean to serve our Lady generously *now is the time*. Their lives during your absence will make a most important foundation-stone in the Congregation's life.

"God bless you, my dear child."

He was sent to Roehampton for a few days after Christmas for the final consultation, and then the two nuns started for Rome, *viâ* Florence. They went to Fiesole, where the Father General and his Assistants have resided since their expulsion from the Gesù, in Rome, to see Father Weld, then English Assistant, and had also an interview with the Father General, the saintly Father Beckx. His Paternity treated them with great kindness, and after a long conversation, in which he showed the greatest interest in their success, gave them, with his blessing, a motto :

Priez, espérez, travaillez.
(Pray, labour, hope).

On reaching Rome, they received affectionate hospitality in the Convent of Marie Reparatrice, on the Pincio.

The two nuns arrived in Rome, January 21st. Two days afterwards they received a visit from his Eminence Cardinal Howard, who procured for them a private audience with the Holy Father on January 29th.

His Holiness received them with the utmost kindness, read the letter which they had brought to him from his Eminence Cardinal Manning, and said that he was quite sure that their Order would be confirmed in due time, and would do great good in the Church.

The two nuns were admitted to the Mass of His Holiness on the feast of the Purification, and received Holy Communion from his hands.

They had brought with them the greater part of

the Constitutions, and Father Dignam had undertaken to send on the rest.

(To the Mother General.)

"My dear Child,—I got your letter last night, and was very pleased to see you had got on so well. But now do prepare yourself for patience, for you will want it. As far as audiences go, &c., people are always gratified in Rome, but to get any business done is a work which tries even the best prepared. I am doing a bold thing in the text; it took Father Morris' breath away at first, but when I showed him how vitally necessary it is (as experience has shown many a time in England) for the fair management of the Congregation, he sanctioned it, though he wonders what will be said about it. I will send you a full list of the corrections in a few days—full, I mean, so far as we have gone. Now, don't let any disappointment fret you—keep calm and mind your *tessera; priez, espérez, travaillez.*

"God bless you both."

(To the Same.)

"Perhaps it may be a comfort to repeat it, since you say in your letter which I got yesterday, 'You know you left me free,' how fully and entirely I desire you to be so. Any and every change by which you judge the Congregation will be made more acceptable to our Lady, I shall wish it as much as you."

The nuns soon handed in a copy of the Constitutions to Propaganda for examination. It is not

necessary to print the Constitutions before soliciting the *Lauda*, as they are given to one Consultor only, who reports on them to the Sacred Congregation. The Consultor chosen was the late Abbot Smith, of the Benedictine Order—a man of great learning, who had resided forty years in Rome, and was Consultor of the Propaganda, Holy Office, and several other of the Sacred Congregations. He had the reputation of great severity in his judgments, which was more than confirmed by his appearance. He was extremely tall and portly, of a severe cast of countenance, and his manner at first most repelling and eccentric. Under this was hidden a truly kind and faithful heart.

The nuns were told to come to him at St. Paul's outside the Walls, where he always spent Holy Week. Accordingly they went thither in pouring rain on Wednesday in Holy Week, and with trembling hearts, fearing some adverse judgment, they entered the magnificent Basilica, with its forest of white marble pillars and gorgeous altars of malachite.

They knelt at the shrine wherein rests the body of St. Paul, and then passed into the parlour. Abbot Smith said to them: "I have read a great many Rules and Constitutions in my lifetime, but I never read any which have pleased me so much as yours. The man who wrote these must have drunk in the spirit of St. Ignatius for at least twenty years."

Abbot Smith had not the slightest clue as to who had written the Constitutions, and it was

a singular coincidence that at this date, April, 1879, Father Dignam had been in the Society exactly twenty-three years. The Abbot became very cordial, and passed with the nuns from the parlour into the Basilica. "Have you seen," said he, "the place where St. Ignatius made his last vows?" The nuns replied that they had supposed this act had taken place in the ancient Basilica, which had been destroyed by fire in 1823. "No," said Abbot Smith, "it is not generally known that a small portion of the ancient Basilica escaped destruction, and is now incorporated into the present building. It was in the chapel of our Lady, which was also that of the Blessed Sacrament, where St. Ignatius said Mass, made his own final vows, and received those of his companions, on Easter Friday, April 22nd, 1541." So Abbot Smith led them to the spot where a tablet on the wall records the great event, and then he took leave of them saying, "You may be at rest, you are sure of your Brief." On Easter Sunday the nuns were admitted to the Sistine Chapel to hear the Pope's Mass, and to receive Holy Communion from his hands.

In Low Week they had another private audience of His Holiness, and also witnessed a public one. Shortly afterwards they left Rome, and after making a pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto, returned to England with hearts full of gratitude for the immense blessings they had received, and which they felt were entirely owing, under God, to the unceasing care and labour of their dear and venerated spiritual Father. Early in August of that same year his

Eminence Cardinal Manning signified his wish to visit the community at Roehampton, and he consented to do so on the 18th, when the annual retreat was to commence, and a great number of Sisters would therefore be assembled together. Father Dignam was to give the retreat, and was consequently there to meet his Eminence. He said afterwards, "The moment I saw the Cardinal's face I knew he had the Brief in his pocket." But the Superior and Sisters had no idea that it would come so soon. However, it was true. When all were seated around him, his Eminence drew from his pocket the Brief of Praise, which had been signed by the Holy Father on July 18th. It was, indeed, a happy day for all.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE OF THE POOR.

"He shall save the souls of the poor, and their name shall be honourable in His sight."

In November, 1876, Father Dignam was sent to St. Helens, a large town twelve miles from Liverpool. The industries of this town consist of the plate-glass works, the manufacture of various chemicals; and in its immediate vicinity are large collieries. St. Helens was one of the oldest missions of the Society after the partial relaxation of the penal laws, and the residence was always called Lowe House. About forty years ago the mission was divided, and the very fine and large Church of Holy Cross built, with a residence for the Fathers. Since then a third church has arisen in another quarter of the town, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and served by secular clergy. It was at Holy Cross that Father Dignam was stationed, and there he was destined to pass nearly sixteen years, and the numerous changes in his life were over; for in the nine years since his ordination he had changed his residence six or seven times. It was supposed by some that St. Helens would prove a "very uncongenial place" to him, but no change came amiss to him. Like

"Deichel the happy" he had the secret of true content, "*Because no one can take my God from me.*" Very soon after his arrival he wrote to his sister.

(To his Sister.)

"If I had but time, what a deal I could tell you about this wonderful place. I have none but poor, but they are as thick as bees. We are six in number, and as jolly as you could wish. A very snug house, and a vast church, on which, however, we have a debt of £5,000, which is a drawback, as every penny we get goes to pay interest, and we have no books, and find it hard to keep decent vestments.

"Out of doors the first aspect of St. Helens would give you the horrors. The town is spotted over with great wastes and cinder heaps, and the refuse of chemicals. The air is charged with sulphur and other strange things, so that often when you get up on a wet morning you find the streets coated with blue slime. Clean hands are a thing you give up. The children burrow for cinders while they are still smoking, and look very like imps, but are very good boys and girls, for all that. My labours are confined to a very small field, but it took some little time to tell one row of huts from another. The houses are much worse than they need be, for there is very little real destitution, but the work is so dirty that they settle down in it and give up the idea of appearances. Our people are almost all either men or old women, for the girls have no work here and go away. You will after all this, of course,

be surprised when I tell you that I am quite well and have more rest of body and mind than I have had for years."

(To the Same.)

"I have been enjoying my laborious *far niente*, and it has been, I am sure, of great use to me. You will find it hard, perhaps, to realize the difference there is in dealing with different classes of souls. Here the simplicity is absolutely primitive. The picturesqueness of the place, in its black dirt, its lurid flames, its roaring engines, and the hoarse steam-whistle that shrieks out its summons to the work-people is remarkable. A lady who succeeded in getting here to see me, wrote afterwards of 'that island of cinders, surrounded by pits of brimstone, without any treacle,' and it is not a bad description. In some of the factories, in spite of innumerable chimneys, the smoke and steam rush out at the unglazed windows, so that they look perennially on fire, and they pour out the green slimy refuse from spouts in the walls into pools that surround their base, which they coolly leave you to walk into, if you don't look out for yourself. I was coming past one of these places a month ago, and found a drunken Irishman, who had just been fished out by a comrade and wanted to fight him for taking the liberty; he was green and blue from top to toe, and glazed all over. The man knocked him down, and dragged him over the cinder-heaps to his home, *I superintending the operation.* I could tell you plenty of stories if there were time; but this is only gossip.

You ask me why I am sent here; but, as it is not a very wise question, you will not, on reflection, be surprised if I tell you that I don't know, and certainly never thought of asking. At any rate, it has proved a better rest than any three months' coddling; and the Provincial, who was here the other day, knows that when he takes me away it will not be to please *me*."

Although Father Dignam never spoke of it, he suffered far more than even newcomers generally do from the atmosphere of St. Helens. Often he was obliged to come back from his visiting suffering from severe nausea. When a friend, coming into St. Helens, once remarked that the sewers must be greatly out of order, the Father replied gaily: "Oh, no; it is only the chemicals; it requires the nose of a connoisseur to know the difference."

(To A.)

"St. Helens, 1876.

"Thank God I am settled down once more. It is work, too, which I used to have in the old days long ago; and I have not a single creature to look after but the poor, thick as blackberries in season. I have but five minutes' walk and I am in the midst of them. A scolding to one, a word to cheer up, to another; pack a child off to school, and hear the confessions of or anoint the sick, sometimes three or four in a morning. As much work is done in an hour as could be got through

at Bournemouth in a day. Such is my present life. How glad I am to hear your good news of body and spirit too. Well, thank God ; for though the cross is fruitful, we need, at least, respite ; and health and fervour are no less His gifts than sickness and desolation."

The Convent of Nôtre Dame, at St. Helens, had been founded years before Father Dignam went to Holy Cross. The nuns teach the children in the very fine and large schools at Lowe House, the Sacred Heart, and Holy Cross, and also a branch school in the latter mission, and schools in the neighbourhood at Thatto Heath and Gerard's Bridge, besides a middle-class day school in the convent, and have residing under their roof a large number of pupil teachers. The blessing and benefit they have brought to St. Helens could not be easily told. This convent was destined to become very familiar and very dear to Father Dignam. It had been founded in St. Helens in 1858, and was then governed by a very remarkable nun.

Sister Mary Ann Kohl was not only a woman of talent and capability, but of rare sanctity. To sum up her character in one word, she was a perfect Religious and living model of what the Blessed Mother Julie Billiart desired and intended her Religious to be. It is hardly necessary to say that a close friendship was formed between her and Father Dignam. She was a woman of great discernment of character, and she held him in the utmost veneration and relied on his counsel.

Had she survived him, she would have given much valuable information concerning him. Naturally, little correspondence passed between him and this convent on account of its close vicinity to him.

The Sisters rendered him every service in their power, and in later years these became very valuable indeed.

The end of 1877, or beginning of 1878, must have brought to Father Dignam the news of his youngest brother's death. William Dignam died in Australia, November 16th, 1877, leaving a widow and several children. He was always a fervent Catholic. A nun in Australia wrote to his eldest sister that it was beautiful to see him pray at Mass and during his meditation, which he made daily in church.

A priest from Australia afterwards called on Father Dignam, and gave him the keenest pleasure by the high terms of praise in which he spoke of William. He said he was in every sense a perfect Christian; and afterwards, speaking to a friend, said Father Dignam was very good, but "not to be compared to his brother."

(To his Sister.)

"Holy Cross,

"February 18th, 1878.

"My dear Child in J.C.—I do not, I assure you, overlook the difference between St. Benedict for a brother and the creature whom God has given to you; but you must be patient and not

give up hoping even about him. Dwell upon the truth that it is a miracle that I am no worse, and you will find new courage for prayer. St. Scholastica's[1] freak show us how God has a Mother's side as well as a Father's—and I think you and I must have short memories if we cannot recall certain proofs of the same in our case. But be sure her life was but the expression in act of à Kempis: *De amore Jesu super omnia*, and how can we who are penitents love as she loved unless we penetrate what a well of stern asceticism that most beautiful chapter contains. It is only by dying we can live, and nature is long a-dying.

"*Invite vult mori*, as he says again. And surely it is not so hard to see (when at last our eyes are really open) how very, very little things matter so long as we love Him, serve Him, do His will, and therefore how to be upset, disturbed, put out, made sad or angry, is and can be but a most bad compliment to Him. Could you have been angry on the day you made your vows because you had lost a pin? And yet if things do disturb us, it is proof that we have forgotten Him so far as to allow things no bigger than pins to obscure our appreciation of Him. I am quite well, though I could do with a lot more strength, if the Lord did not consider that I do mischief enough as it is. Pray for my Lent sermons. God bless you."

[1] Father Dignam's sister was fond of the story which connects together St. Benedict and his sister St. Scholastica, and often referred to it in her letters. It is found in the Roman Breviary for St. Scholastica's day.

(To the Same.)

"When you can conquer a real humiliation without pain, you will be a saint. It would be always wiser to say you do not know my movements and leave others to make their own arrangements. Never receive messages for me. I never believe what nuns who have left their convents tell me, and I have never found myself deceived by *not believing* them."

Father Dignam's great desire for his sister's perfection led him to insist greatly on her detachment from himself, and his fear lest her affection for him should be too natural led him, perhaps, at times, too far in his severity. He writes to her:

(To his Sister, when he was about to make his own Retreat.)

"My dear Child,—I have thought a good deal of what you said about my severity, and I must own, I think it is all true. It is useful, of course, to recognize how very little one is able to practise of that which one best loves to preach, but I am not unaccustomed to small discoveries of that nature. It may be true, of course, too, that this very thing is that which in its bitterness purifies and makes these ordinarily so incompatible relations not only possible, but so easy and natural to us, and we may get what consolation we can out of the thought. Pray for me during these days that are coming, pray practically, not beating the air, but praying for a poor sinner of the sort that our Lord says is to have many stripes—who knows but does not *do*."

She was naturally anxious that he should be sent to give a retreat at her convent. This brought down a stern reproof, though given, as he often did give such reproofs, in a playful way.

"You made me laugh at your recourse to the note on the three classes. The heroism of the beginning of the sentence cooled down so rapidly that its end is really worth a study. I could take parallel passages from the letters of five-and-twenty silly people, and you must let me say to you what Job said to his wife—'Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women; if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?'

"This is the text. 'He sees how very particularly much I want you; it does seem hard. Dearest Mother is discouraged after the two refusals in the spring, so that there seems no *earthly way of getting you*—and yet others manage things so easily—I don't understand it.'

"Now, I should like you to meditate:

"1. That it is presumption which insists that such and such things are means to the end.

"2. That to call God's providence 'hard' is a mild blasphemy.

"3. That the underlined passage can only be prompted by your inordinate love for me."

Then he continues:

"You must learn to look ahead and see that what seems sometimes a great misfortune now will be, in God's hands, a grace by-and-by. (Were not the past graces of our lives disguised so?) And all

this will make you like God and less like the volcano which is not quite an extinct one yet."

Advice is asked how to rightly check this over-great desire, and he replies:

"About myself you must remember that the radical way of curing whatever may still be inordinate, is as much as you can to leave off wishing. To convince oneself that a joy which was only a joy is not worth wishing for, and that to renounce the wish is to secure its fruition in Heaven—this surely in the school of St. Ignatius ought not to be beyond us."

(To the Same.)

"You say: 'Take me while I am willing,' and thanks to God's dear grace, I know you are willing; your courage makes me hope all things, and you know that I love you too dearly to spare you one pang that may make you dearer to our Lord. If you are generous enough to appreciate my charity, repay me with your prayers. I never had more faith in them than now, and certainly never more need."

(To the Same.)

"Undoubtedly these are the days of our Lord's mercy to you. The floodgates are open, and in the midst of the waters of tribulation which are inundating you, there is another flood which you cannot see at all. They are precious days for you, for humiliation never comes alone, and however borne (and I am not going to pay you any compliments about it) is sure to bring what nothing

else can bring of eternal treasure. 'Oh, if your eyes were opened' (do you know that translation of an old Spanish poem?) 'thou wouldst surely see how suffering's prize is greater than mortal tongue can tell.' How much better it is to be in the waters half-sunk, half-fearing, dark and desolate, than to be on Mount Thabor. A thousand times better struggling than all going well. Now you have left off sowing, I hope, but don't complain of the harvest. Woe be to us if we judge Him 'Who giveth the increase.' If you are to be all His, you must die, my dear child, you must die. Whenever you are told of a fault there is *sure* to be something in it, and to say 'I am right,' is madness, for it blinds; but to believe 'I am wrong' and pray will bring light."

(To his Sister, in answer to her letter which reached him on his birthday in 1878.)

"What a set of old fogies we are all becoming. God grant the wisdom and grace along with the inevitable age. Nothing consoles me like the prayers I get; how I wish my own correspondence were there to all the blessings which those prayers bring. I feel very like a sign-post, ever showing others the way, but never moving on, and I have no refuge but to be ashamed of myself."

(To a Nun.)

"You have, thank God, great courage, and with such solid graces as these, there is but one thing to learn, but it is a big thing, so try to learn it well;

even the brave, even the generous, keep in the very depth of their own heart a kind of little base alliance with self, which prevents their offering from being a holocaust, and it was a ray of light falling *there* that made you cry out: 'Have I truly given all?' Blessed ray, divine light, grace inestimable, and the thing I have called big is to know the way to use it well. You must comprehend then, that in dealing with your own heart, you have an incorrigible robber to cope with, and that even for a true and faithful, even a generous soul, if we can ever dare to call anything of ours generous, *this is a lifetime's work.* And if you are to persevere, you must never lose sight of this, else you will never endure the long, bitter, killing humiliations, by which alone the giving all is made a reality. You begin to give all, and straightway you begin to rob, to take back your gift; you are ashamed, you are sorry; the next examen you again find yourself a thief. Seldom is one found practically to understand that this is sanctity, to sit down by the well of bitter waters, to wipe away the ever-flowing corruption, to be the sleepless *garde-malade* of the poor mad heart, ever taking each new theft from its hands and restoring it to its owner. This is the only real idea of giving all, and this moreover *to the end*, so that the last sigh of the saint is the renunciation of the last apostasy to self, and this contentedly, cheerfully, and, wonder of wonders, with indifference to success, so that only the fight goes on, and the will never tires. You will understand me now, when I say that there is a meditation to be made on three classes of men,

who make their particular examen. The first makes it but does not see the *intimate* faults—these we are speaking of. The second sees them, is ashamed and renounces with contrition, but there stops, and this is *resistere*, as St. Ignatius says (in the Annotation). The third, not content with the shame and the sorrow, reduces to courageous practice the purpose of amendment, pursues the enemy into the recesses of the heart, kills it there by contrary acts, and this is *prosternere*. This alone, then, is to give all, this alone is sanctity, and we know nothing of it, till we have learnt that it is a lifetime's work, a battle in which each victory is the prelude to a new defeat, but in which, from defeats and victories alike, we may grow rich."

(To the Same.)

"The ulcer of self-esteem lies in the depth of your soul, since it needs so terrible a knife to reach it, for when the surgeon is omniscient, we can safely judge of the character of the wound by the instrument he selects. Remember that it is God's hardest work to make grace fructify in a heart, yet keep its own nothingness fully in view. 'Humility,' says St. Austin, is 'love of God going as far as contempt of self.' Whenever you find pain in giving up the confidence of others, such pain *is* evidence that self-love is not dead; that with the shepherd something of the hireling has been mixed."

. . . . . .

(To his Sister.)

"I am so highly strung up that every nerve is dancing in my body as soon as I sit still.

"You have got the right thought out of the octave of the feast of the Sacred Heart. To regret the wasted love and the wasted wishes, is the true first step towards the Sacred Heart's love. All the wishes worth having are in the *Pater noster*, and is it not strange that He has told us so so earnestly, and we are so slow in believing His word? See, too, how this is the fruit of the fundamental meditation in another shape—indifference to creatures."

In September, 1878, Father Dignam gave a retreat at the English Convent, Bruges, and when that was over, he was sent on business to Holland, from whence he wrote to his sister.

(To the Same.)

"The Hague,

"September 27th, 1878.

"My dear Child in J. C.,—You will want, in spite of all the indifference we have been talking about, to know something of my wanderings, and I think I can tell you that to-day I am as well as I can be, but it has only been to-day. The work, if one can call it work, has been hard, as I was on Tuesday here, Wednesday at Amsterdam, Thursday at Haarlem, and now to-day here again to see the Provincial and Socius. It is certainly by far the most interesting country I have ever seen, and our own people as cordial as they are curious.

"A green, bright, clean place, where everybody is quiet and comfortable, as polite as France used to be, and the Catholics, both men and women, devout and religious.

"You know how much I shall want prayers during the long-delayed retreat which I am looking forward to.

"Tell your dear Mother that her soul and those of all her children find their way into my chalice, and I pray our Lord's best treasures for every one of them."

(To A.)

"My dear Child,—How well I know all that this terrible message[1] has done. And yet now it is, above all, that you must be very brave and truly above yourself and your nature, for, poor children all of you, each one's pain is multiplied by the pain of all the rest. My child, you must be another St. Chantal in your fortitude, and in the vividly seen and entirely grasped supernatural truth which fills you. *You* must not grieve for this for her sake—in deepest truth, it is not a sorrow nor a misfortune for her, and especially so as, thanks be to God, she is ready and brave and generous with her own *Suscipe*. For yourself it is but one step nearer to our Lord—a bit more of the heart given to Him, of which He will never rest till He has all. It is about your mother and father that one can hardly know how to be strong and firm—it is so sad for them.

[1] The doctor's decision that her sister's case was incurable and hopeless.

But even for them—why has God been so lavish with His graces?—why so filled them with faith and love and resignation?—if it be not to bear fruit worthy of Himself. And you must take care, or they will put you to shame by their courage and simplicity. I am feeling for you all, and thinking of you all, and praying that you all may give God glory—for this world passes away so soon, and moments like these are golden. Yesterday I saw a crucifix lying *on the floor*, and it seemed to talk as I had never known it before. If our Lord's death, and such a cruel one, and His Mother's heart-wringing had only just happened as much for us as it really did so long ago, should we not be able to carry our griefs better as they welded themselves into His, and His pain and ours became one? God bless you, my child."

(To C., a Young Lady who was intending to become a Religious.)

"Now, my child, that I am writing, I cannot quite give you all the praise I hoped to do, and I shall want to hear a better account of you before I shall sanction anything so serious as what is called the heroic act. You see, child, I think that in your quiet, retired life at L—— God is giving you a great opportunity, and that it must be used or it will be abused. It is certain that in such a life you must either be bent on doing all you can to oblige and please others, or else nature will be sure to have its own way, and you will grow more and more selfish—more attached, I mean, to your own will, inclination,

and even *whim*, and you will grow no better by that. Well, now, I don't expect *you* to be able to tell me that you really give up your own will habitually and cheerfully—that would be too much to expect—but the signs by which I shall be able to judge for myself about that are these—first, if your squabbles, tiffs, and little peevish ways grow less and less, and secondly, if you give all the time faithfully to your spiritual duties, except when you omit or postpone them in order to give pleasure to others. Now, how am I to know all this, or you either, if your night examen is generally neglected? So, my child, you must wait, if you please, till you are a better girl, and somewhere about the Assumption you can write and tell me how you have succeeded in what I ask. You want the name of a meditation book. Well, the one I think most suitable is one published by Burns in four tiny volumes, by Father Andrade; but, perhaps, that is the very one which you say you don't like. You must tell me. About novels, there are two sorts of girls to whom different advice must be given. Novels may be turned into excellent means of mortification if there is *good will;* and if there is not, they had better be given up altogether. I should be better pleased if you could use them in the former way, and the rule I should make would be this: (1) Never read them for more than half an hour at a time; never twice in the same day, nor more than three times in one week. (2) Leave out two pages in the middle of the time, and don't read them at all. (3) Whenever you find yourself getting a little breathless and excited about something in the book

which is coming, always shut it up directly and put it away for a fortnight. With these three rules, I consider novel-reading may be made a very profitable exercise, but it is not everybody who begins that perseveres. You can try. I don't think there is any sin in making fun of people when there is no malice in it, and you do not hurt their feelings."

(To his Sister.)

"It is a life's work—so you say: 'Then I must be displeasing to our Lord all my life!' Does this follow? Can no one be pleasing to our Lord until *everything* is conquered within them? Is there, then, no such thing as pleasing Him by *tending* to a perfection not yet attained? Are struggles and patience under *failure*, and ever recurring failure, not pleasing to Him? Does He not even often leave a thing in our hearts in *order* that we may please Him by our perseverance in what seems to us a fruitless fight, and our self-humiliation in unsuccessful efforts? *Wait for God.*"

Father Dignam gave the annual retreat to the nuns at Bruges in 1879, and then went straight to Ireland to be a guest at Gracefield, the residence of his devoted friends, Mr. and Mrs. Grace. He writes to his sister:

"I took advantage of the semi-double to relieve my conscience, and said a votive Mass in honour of the Blessed Trinity in pure, simple thanksgiving for all we have been trying to say to one another, for I feel more deeply than I can say how wonderful

has been God's bounty to us all during these last days."

After a short stay at Gracefield, Mr. and Mrs. Grace took him for a brief tour in Ireland. They went first to Killarney, which at this time of year (early in October) is, if the weather be fine, in its fullest beauty, as at the fall of the leaf, the arbutus woods become perfectly golden. Father Dignam's soul, so attuned to all kinds of beauty, must indeed have enjoyed the sight of the lovely lakes, the purple mountains, and the golden woods, as they lingered amidst the ruins of Muckross, and wound their way to Kenmare and Glengarriff. They visited Cork and Queenstown, and Father Dignam then returned to England. He spoke of his impressions of this short glimpse of Ireland. He was charmed with the scenery, but added, "I could not enjoy it much, because the people looked so sad, and their cabins are wretched. It oppressed my heart."

(To Sister Agnes Joseph, a nun at the English Convent, Bruges, who was dying of Consumption at the age of 24.)

"There is only one word in your little letter which makes me anxious, and that is about making the retreat '*very* well.' Don't try so much to make it '*very* well,' as to make it as well as God lets you, and mind to be satisfied at the end. Our Lord was never so satisfied with St. Gertrude in her sickness as when she laid her head at His feet, or sometimes when she was very bold, on His Heart, to whisper to

Him, 'You see I cannot do it.' And it is wrong for you to dread the judgment, for it would be cowardice to doubt His own promise to you; you have in very truth left all things and followed Him, and so at the Last Day you must not be judged, but sit with Him to judge, and for your own particular judgment, why, my child, is it not true that in everything He is Himself preparing you for it now! Ah, little Agnes Joseph, how glad I am you have tried so well to be good this year, and what a big grace our dear Lord gave us to conquer the nasty sadness a year ago. I thank Him for that with all my heart, and now He has taken you in hand all to Himself, and there is no Master like Him. Joy in God's will, you say, and you have good cause, for God's will is indeed a blessed one for you. I shall pray for you, you know, every day that every day you may be a step nearer to Him, and to our dear Mother, and yet *always without solicitude*, as Blessed John Berchmans teaches you. God bless you; our Lady love you; you dear, happy child, and pray for me.

"Ever in J. C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

At the end of 1880 there came a coal strike at St. Helens, and the town was reduced to utmost misery. The collieries employ a large number of people, and the rise in the price of coal (generally much cheaper at St. Helens than elsewhere) affects everyone, while trade is almost at a standstill. To add to the suffering, the weather in January, 1881, became intensely cold. Many well remember the

great snow-storm on the 18th, which impeded railway traffic and caused several trains to be embedded in the snow for days. A lady who was staying with Mr. and Mrs. Grace at the Fleece Hotel, thus described the aspect of St. Helens:

"Looking out into the streets," she says, "we saw the snow either lying in heaps or half-trodden into black mud, leaden skies, and groups of miserable, gaunt-looking men lounging about in enforced idleness."

Long before a relief fund had been organized in the town, relief was given out at Holy Cross, and Father Dignam had the distribution. He came into the hotel in the evening, and was describing the misery. "I shall never forget one man; he came to me and said, 'Oh, Father, if you could but give me a few pence. My wife and children are on their way to the workhouse (the distance was four miles), and they'll die of starvation on the road; if I could only give them a bit of bread; they have not tasted food to-day.'

"I gave him a florin," said the Father; "he looked at the coin, he looked at me to make sure there was no mistake, and then he said:

"'Great God in Heaven, my wife is saved,' and rushed off at break-neck speed."

A resident in St. Helens writes: "I remember Father Dignam's intense compassion for the people during the terrible coal strike of the winter 1880–81, and how he had the presbytery door left open that the poor should not even have to knock before receiving the relief he had procured for them.

"Afterwards he told us how much struck he had been by cases of absolute distress of people who were considered quite well off. But he gave no clue to their names.

"How much these people could have told us of his tender kindness."

In the beginning of 1881 Father Dignam happened to be dining out, and in company of a person of high position, when the latter suddenly said to him, "Father Dignam, I suppose you know Father Law is dead and devoured by cannibals."

The shock was so great that the tears ran down Father Dignam's face, and the speaker, we may hope, learnt a lesson on speaking without reflection.

The news had only just reached England, and the moving details of that slow martyrdom at Umzila's kraal, which few strangers even can read without strong emotion, had not yet been made known. Father Dignam's strongest friendship in the Society perhaps, excepting that for Father Weld, was for Father Augustus Law. He used to love to tell stories of him in the St. Beuno's days of his unalterable sweetness and perfect simplicity.

The following letter is addressed to a lady, who, after a long and agonizing illness of years, was drawing near the end. She was one of whose sanctity he had a very high opinion. She was sister to the lady whose letters are addressed to A——:

(To the Sister of A——)

"Holy Cross,
"December 13th, 1879.

"My dear Child in J.C.,—I have been thinking about you. You do not quite belong to this world now. You are just making those circles in the air such as the swallow makes before she starts on her straight, true flight homewards, but in the meantime the moments are so precious and so blessed, that you must not repine at their being prolonged; and mind, to use them well, it is not effort that is wanted, because that very thought of the exceeding preciousness of the last days might easily lead to that. No, without any strain, when once the *Sume et suscipe* has been heartily said (or thought), trust all the rest to our Lord, and believe He will be more honoured by your very tranquillity than by any multiplied acts which overwrought nature might suffer from. You have had a long noviceship, and now presently you are going to make your solemn profession, to renounce, or rather to abandon, all that your heart can love in this world—your money, your body, and your will. Well, these, by His grace, it does not cost you much to surrender into the 'Everlasting arms.' But to leave the dear ones, that costs still! All right. It cost our Lady, and it is all the better because it costs. But you know, my child, you have had a very special grace given to you in your long illness, which I have called a noviceship. The grace of a resignation so easy, real, and bright, that

it did not seem to be resignation at all. This was our Lady's own gift. You could not have been so without rare grace, and now this grace must bear its fruit. You must be clear that the separation from those you love so dearly is but so short a one, and so good a one, that it too must be brightly, radiantly embraced, so to show our Lord that your trust is a reality, and that you don't fear—no, nor regret to say good-bye to them whom you will meet again so soon, and in such joy. Convince yourself of this, if there be need, and let it be part of yourself, so long as yourself remains 'waiting for God.' Do you remember how A——once put into pretty verses some sermon of mine on the old text, 'Count it all joy when you suffer.'[1] This is what I would have you do now, to give our dear Lord His *bonne bouche;* all joy, because even what they suffer now will be found to be joy too when it has passed the crucible. God bless you, my own child. I am praying for you, and when in Heaven you see how much I want it, you will pray for me. You know you used to be a Turk upon that point.

"Ever in J. C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

To A——, who was disappointed because it was impossible for Father Dignam to visit her dying sister, he wrote:

"Our Lord has had His own way all the same, and so you must say *Fiat* to that as to so many other things He asks of His *ancilla*. No, my child,

[1] Some lines translated from the Spanish. Published in *Messenger*, vol. ii. page 3.

I did quite realize all, and I am sure you will try to keep jealous watch over your own impetuous heart, and let the 'Shall not my soul be subject unto God' be very, very familiar to you now. He will be so grateful for a little generosity, and you must give it to Him. You have wanted a meditation. Would it not be a good one to take Heaven itself for your *compositio loci*, and ask for the light and grace to see present things as you will see them when you four meet. You the last arrival, after the first ecstatic recognition of our Lord's sweet welcome (the first I say; it never ends, that first long ecstasy, but—*au ciel on se reconnait*—we may, for our purpose, suppose), you and your dear ones join to recall the days when *all this* was won. Perhaps of all the pains now so brightly crowned, none has been so fruitful in the closeness of the mutual union, and the union of all with Him, as this very creature which we call separation, and the use of it mainly rests for its excellence on the faith and the joyful resignation which only that faith can give. Am I fanciful? I think not. It is really and solidly true, and St. Lucy did not grieve that her mother was not with her when at last she gained her victory, or that St. Agatha, who called her *Soror mea Lucia*, had gone up again to Heaven. So you must turn to the children with the brightest of faces, in which no trace of preoccupation can be seen, and *Ecce ancilla* must mean all sorts of loving, willing, joyous abandonment to the blessed Will.

"God bless you, my most dear child.

"Ever in J. C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

(To A——, after her sister's death.)

"Holy Cross,

"February 23, 1880.

"My dear Child in J. C.,—Yes, I think there was every reason to expect that you would suffer from this vague depression when all was over. You see there was so much of supernatural consolation in a death so holy, and the manifest grace of your being with them at the time—that there was scarcely room for nature to have her first rights admitted. It will be no harm to you, and you have learnt before this the lesson of à Kempis;[1] it is a very humble little lesson, and seems insignificant beside the greater ones, but it is a most substantial element of solid virtue—that even, tranquil endurance of the many phases of soul which pass over us."

(To his Sister.)

"The Holy Ghost would have us listen to and study each soul, to see what He is doing and then to help *Him*. It takes a long time to teach children all that the particular examen is destined to do, and for many souls it is years of work to overcome the disgust at the constant marking of faults, and years more before they can even see the blessed work it does in them, so as to make them love it. And it won't do for you to apply all that I give to an *old* soldier to a fervent young recruit who is, perhaps, miles from suspecting in her spiritual babyhood that she has a predominant passion at all.

[1] Bk. iii. c. 17.

"And now for a short postscript to tell you about the bazaar[1] a little, and to thank all my generous and, I hope, patient benefactors for their truly immense kindness. It was a surprising success, surprising on both sides; ——was amazed to see what we could do, and has not got over it yet, and we not less so to see what they could do in the way of spending money. It was the more remarkable as we were baptized with the waters of humiliation to begin with. Telegrams of excuse hailed upon us, and we started with a real fiasco; but from that time the thing prospered, and we shall clear about £700 from efforts almost unaided. The Bruges contributions, I need scarcely say, were invaluable, and the Fathers were so touched when they saw the little beautiful things which came last (Mdlle.——'s) that they promised that *all* should say Mass for her and the community on the day of her Clothing."

Mrs. Grace had taken a great liking to St. Helens, and she and her husband had for some years spent the winters there. She was a great benefactress to the Mission of Holy Cross. When Father Dignam first went there the church and residence did not adjoin each other, and the Fathers had to cross a piece of ground, generally a muddy swamp, to gain the church. The house also did not possess any large room for guild meetings and other purposes. Chiefly by Mrs. Grace's liberality a fine room was built and a corridor connecting it with the church. She had been very active concerning the bazaar,

[1] Held in St. Helens for the Holy Cross Mission.

and held a stall loaded with handsome vestments. As few of these were sold, she gave all that remained to Holy Cross. She was of a highly nervous temperament, and suffered much from spiritual anxiety. Father Dignam's direction was of the greatest benefit to her, and she became calm and happy by its means. Though elderly, she seemed in good health, and led a very hardy life. She had not intended to return to St. Helens till December, but having need of some counsel and knowing Father Dignam was to leave on November 11th for a retreat, she travelled down alone on the 9th, intending to stay two nights. Father Dignam wrote on the 10th to a friend: "Mrs. Grace arrived here last night, stouter and stronger than I ever saw her, and to-night I anointed her. I do not think she will die, but acute inflammation of the pleura has made her a pitiable object in twenty-four hours. I never saw so vividly what pain can do in a short time. Pray for her."

She did not recover, and it was a strange coincidence that she should die at St. Helens without him. But God, the God she had so faithfully served and fervently loved, did not let her lose by this accident. Her death was indeed happy and blessed. She was buried in the beautiful cemetery outside St. Helens. Father Dignam thus wrote about her:

"She died a most peaceful and happy death, never having one fear or trouble since I gave her Viaticum and bade her good-bye. She was conscious to the last."

The misery which the coal strike had brought to light increased in Father Dignam's mind the conviction which had been growing for years that a convent of nuns who visit the poor was greatly needed, and his thoughts naturally turned to those whom he often called "his own children."

Father Richard Cardwell, who had lately come into office as Superior of Holy Cross, shared his views most strongly, and the matter had been for some time under serious consideration.

(To Lady Georgiana Fullerton.)

"Holy Cross, St. Helens,
"January 3rd, 1882.

"Dear Lady Georgiana,—I have been for a long time wishing in the interests of our poor people here to have a small convent of Mother Magdalen's at St. Helens. The material obstacles to the preservation of womanly delicacy are such as to be almost beyond the sphere of a priest's influence, and I look to nuns as our only hope. Unfortunately, just as I thought I had accomplished my object, the Bishop has scruples—he fears that small communities at such a work will fail in discipline. My hope, then, is in testimonials of work done, and here I hope you may help me. I am writing to Mgr. —— with the same end, but, of course, I shall have to depend mainly upon you.

"I am leaving to-night to give a retreat, and shall only be home on Monday, so if you will kindly address any aid you may give me to Father Cardwell,

I shall be grateful to you, and am, with kindest regards to Mr. Fullerton,

"Ever in J. C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

Lady Georgiana used her best efforts, and during the course of January the difficulties in the way of this foundation, which were many and serious, were overcome, and the convent was opened on the feast of the Purification.

The Sisters met with the most loving welcome from the nuns of Notre Dame. They can never forget the thoughtful, sisterly kindness of the Sister Superior. She wished them to make that convent their home until their own was ready. She had earnestly desired this foundation, and her fervent prayers had been offered up for it.

On one occasion when visiting the sick, Father Dignam found a poor boy with a loathsome disease, utterly neglected—unwashed, his bed unmade. He lifted the sufferer out of bed, then made it, washed the poor fellow and supplied his wants. This incident came to light; but probably there were many of the same kind which were never discovered.

Father Dignam in April, 1882, received the news of the death of his old friend, Mrs. Ainsworth. After her husband's death, she had become a nun in the Redemptoristine Convent, Dublin, and her fortune had been devoted to the erection of a fine convent and church dedicated to St. Alphonsus, the latter open to the public and with daily Benediction. She left a son and three daughters; one of the latter

was a nun of Notre Dame, to whom the following letter was addressed:

"Holy Cross,

"April 5th, 1882.

"A long life of very exceptional suffering, a prodigious fight against nature all the time, a holy death—what could we ask for, for those we love best, if not for these? I know what rare graces God had given her, and how truly she sought to make every thought of her life a supernatural one. I have often told of her interior reverence for the poor as being something unique in its beauty, and it is a grace not given to souls who do not labour in earnest to belong all to God."

Another work with which Father Dignam's name is associated is that of the foundation of Providence Free Hospital, St. Helens. Soon after the Poor Servants of the Mother of God began their work at St. Helens they were confronted with the great need of a free hospital. There existed a small Cottage Hospital on the paying system, to which the poor had to subscribe a penny a week for each person, or else pay a shilling per day while in hospital. The Workhouse Infirmary was four miles out of the town, and going thither often entailed the breaking up of a home. Accordingly on December 3rd, 1882, the Sisters, with his blessing and sanction, began to receive into their house a few sick women and children. Shortly afterwards they had the opportunity of having some of their Sisters admitted for hospital training in one of the great London hospitals.

There were, of course, difficulties in the way, one of the chief of them being the choice of Sisters most fitted for the instruction and future work. Father Dignam wrote:

"Do not, pray, be anxious about a thing so joyful. Go in for it, if only you can get admittance. It is your spirit and your work. Empty St. Helens if you like for the sake of it."

Later on a ward for men was opened in the little hospital. Father Dignam took the greatest interest in the progress of the hospital, and often went to visit the sick therein. In February, 1884, he wrote to the Mother General: "I hear of more sick in the hospital. I confess I am afraid they need another Sister. Three of them whom I have seen this week seem to me tired out. Father Cardwell is as full of admiration and praise as ever." Father Dignam's love for the poor was very great. The words which he had applied to his friend certainly belonged to himself. He had "an interior reverence for the poor, unique in its beauty." "It is most true that this is a grace not given to souls who do not labour in earnest to belong all to God;" and the words "their name shall be honourable in His sight" certainly were true of him in his dealings with the poor. He had a strong admiration for their virtues, a deep compassion for their sufferings, and an intense yearning to supply their spiritual needs.

In July, 1884, the Sisters obtained possession for the hospital of an excellent house standing on a slight slope overlooking Holy Cross Church. It had been a gentleman's residence, once surrounded by

pretty gardens, now turned into wastes of mud and cinders; the sitting-rooms became wards for men, the bed-rooms for women and children, and the Sisters lived in the attics. The hospital was dedicated to Divine Providence. His Eminence Cardinal Manning came to St. Helens in September, and stayed at the Presbytery of Holy Cross. He preached for the benefit of the hospital at Holy Cross Church on September 14th, and the next day "opened" the hospital and presided at the public meeting held there for the same purpose. The church was crowded when his Eminence preached, and the following day a great part of the town was decorated with flags and banners, and an immense crowd assembled outside the hospital.

Cardinal Manning had a great regard for Father Dignam, and the kindness of his Eminence's manner to him on the platform at this public meeting was especially remarked. Once when the S. M. G. Sisters had occasion to consult his Eminence on some perplexing business, they showed him some letters of Father Dignam's on the subject, and he said, "Oh, that settles the matter; do as Father Dignam advises you." To describe how Father Dignam loved this hospital would be beyond our power, and to tell all that he did for it would occupy far more space than is at our disposal. At the time of the Cardinal's visit he literally wore himself out in its service. He wrote the following appeal in its behalf:

PROVIDENCE FREE GENERAL HOSPITAL OF THE POOR SERVANTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

"St. Helens is a town of 60,000 inhabitants, consisting almost entirely of working-men and their families, who are employed in the immense glass and chemical works. Of these, such as are better-off are provided for in sickness by a Cottage Hospital in the neighbourhood, to which, during health, they subscribe. There is also a fever hospital for infectious cases attached to the work-house. For the rest, the St. Helens Hospital is open to all who have the claim which poverty and sickness give. No distinction is made by the Sisters, as regards religion; all are equally welcome. It is supported entirely by charity, and the need, owing to the frequency of accidents and the unhealthy nature of the work, is great. From very small and obscure beginnings through the past three years, during which the Sisters have been encouraged by much local kindness, the hospital is about to emerge into a suitable building, called Hardshaw Hall. To this house, however, large additions will soon have to be made. An appeal is made to Catholics, not through any fear that the people of St. Helens will be backward in giving their aid to the work; they are a people free from unworthy prejudices, and as they know that the hospital is intended for all, they will all sympathize with its prosperity. But the work is a very heavy one, the Sisters themselves are very poor, and yet undertake their own support, and a very large number of their poorest patients are

Catholics, of whom there are upwards of fourteen thousand in St. Helens. The hospital, too, is a work undertaken for the honour of God and of religion, as well as for the relief of misery; and all Catholics, who will be glad to see that from their poverty the Sisters have been enabled, by the Divine blessing, to begin so much needed and so congenial a work of mercy, will, it is hoped, also be glad to aid them by their charitable contributions, to carry out the work, which, trusting in God, they have begun."

He wrote about this appeal: "I send you what it seems to me would be better, and I should not be afraid to scatter it far and wide."

The hospital has, of course, had many trials and difficulties to contend with, but blessings have been plentifully poured out upon it. From the time that the hospital was opened up to January 1st, 1895, the number of patients received was 4,267, of whom 2,467 were men, 1,209 women, and 643 children. The necessity of the work may be easily shown by mentioning the fact that the number of men received from the chemical, copper, iron, glass, and gas works, had been 1,406; from the collieries, 316; railway servants, 34.

In 1885 a successful attempt was made to raise funds for the hospital by holding a public meeting, which was presided over by the Marquis of Ripon. Shortly before this occurred the Sisters issued the first annual report of the hospital.

Father Dignam wrote to the Mother General:

"One word I must send to tell you of my extreme pleasure with the report; the judicious wording, the excellent get-up, and the business-like treatment of the whole matter astonish and delight me. It will make, I think, the best possible impression. About the meeting the circumstances are so singularly and providentially favourable, that there can scarcely be a doubt of its success. I will keep my eye upon the way things go. Do not, therefore, let Sister Superior worry, all will go right."

In 1887, the Sisters had become convinced that, both for the needs of the sick and the accommodation of their own increasing numbers, it was absolutely necessary to build, but they had not a penny. However, Father Dignam bade them put their trust in Divine Providence and begin. A few days after the resolution had been taken, two benefactors most unexpectedly came forward, and undertook to furnish the Sisters with means to build their hospital with all the modern appliances for the same, and when this was completed, the present building would become the convent.

When Father Dignam heard of this, he wrote:

"Your news is indeed amazing, and like all the rest of your wonderful work here, can only be explained by our Lady's blessing. All I can say is what Father Egger has just said to me, it is the most magnificent act of zeal that St. Helens has ever seen, and will, I am convinced, do more good than anything else—even a church, could have done. I thank God with you."

The first stone of this hospital was laid by Lord

Stanley, of Preston,[1] and now again, in consequence of this, great labour fell upon Father Dignam. Letters to write, people to see, arrangements to be made, difficulties to be overcome, and all this in the midst of his own engrossing and arduous work, and he did the same when the hospital was opened the following year, and on every other occasion when he felt he could be of use. When the Bazaar was held for its benefit in December, 1889, he worked hard indeed to render it a success. It occurred more than once that the hospital was the means of affording Father Dignam very great consolation.

In consequence of his literary work, he was exempted from attending the ordinary sick calls of the mission, but several times it happened that pressing cases were brought into the hospital, and no other priest was at home. Then he would come up to the hospital to attend poor men who had been run over in the streets, or crushed by the machinery, or burnt by a blast from the enormous furnaces; and often the poor fellows had neglected their religious duties for years, and it would happen as soon as his work was finished, when he had absolved and anointed, and given the Bread of Life, the soul would pass away ere he could quit the ward, and he would return to his room and his desk with tears in his eyes, and a heart beating with joyful gratitude to the Sacred Heart.

[1] The present Earl of Derby.

CHAPTER VI.

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER AND "MESSENGER OF THE SACRED HEART."

"A man according to My own Heart, who shall do all My Will."

FATHER DIGNAM'S greatest work in life was in connection with the Apostleship of Prayer. He was made Central Director of this Association in 1882. The Apostleship had been founded in England, about 1865, by the late Father William Maher, S.J.; but after his lamented death, in 1877, it languished, and by the time the direction passed into Father Dignam's hands it had practically died away, both in England and Ireland, while in the Colonies it was still unknown. There were one hundred and sixty-nine affiliations in Great Britain, with six hundred and fifty-two Promoters; but the greater number of these, if not all, were simply nominal. The task that lay before him was arduous and discouraging. He threw himself into it with all the energy of his character; and when he ended his work of eleven years he left seven hundred and seventeen affiliations, with two thousand Promoters, all in good working order, and animated with a true spirit of fervour.

The new Central Director was greatly cheered

by the following letter from his Provincial, which he was permitted to put into print :

"London, October 7th, 1882.

"DEAR FATHER DIGNAM,—May God bless and help on this holy work. I earnestly hope that the Holy League will be established and zealously promoted in all the Colleges and Missions of the Province.

"Yours truly in Christ,

"EDWARD I. PURBRICK, S.J.,

"Provincial."

The Apostleship of Prayer is now so widely known that it may seem unnecessary to explain its nature, yet Father Dignam's own words a few months previous to his death were that it was known "only to a handful in comparison to all who might know it, and ought to know it, if we could only get them to listen."

The Apostleship of Prayer, or League of the Sacred Heart, was founded at Vals, near Le Puy, in France, on December 3rd, 1844, by Father Gautrelet, S.J.

It began in the most simple way, its first members being only a few Fathers and scholastics of the Society.

Its object was to spread the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to inspire souls with a special devotion to the Divine Heart pleading for us in Heaven, and thus to bind together all the faithful throughout the world in one great bond of

prayer, in union with that ever-living intercession, that ever-uprising prayer of our Lord, and offering their prayers to Him through the hands of His Holy and Blessed Mother.

And, in order to effect this end, a certain organization was formed with its members of three degrees.

1. Those whose names were enrolled, and also make each day an offering of their prayers, work, and suffering, in union with the intentions of His Divine Heart, and this to be done in a few short words.

2. Those who added to this a decade of the Rosary for the intention of the Holy Father.

3. Those who, once a month, offered a Communion of Reparation to the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

A certain number of the members were enrolled as "Promoters" of the devotion, with power to enter the names of new members, and generally to help the Local Director of the Apostleship wherever it should be founded. All this may seem very simple; but the Apostleship, rightly understood, is a powerful engine in the spiritual life. Father Dignam says:

"It is by the Apostleship of Prayer our Lord wants to conquer all hearts, to subdue them to the dominion of His Father, and His omnipotence. He cannot without help; His hands are bound. The first enemy to be conquered must be within; the work for souls will be of little avail unless the victory over the self *within* be gained. Prayer is very good,

but it has little force without *mortification*. Hence the Apostleship of Prayer is really the Apostleship of unselfishness."

Shortly after beginning his work, he wrote to his sister:

". . . The Apostleship gives me plenty to do. I am having many blessings and many checks, and I want prayers. I have had one of the greatest graces of my life lately, and I cannot help attributing it to Mère Julie Billiart, from circumstances which I can't tell you."

The Apostleship, like all other works, met with opposition. False ideas were entertained concerning it, and prejudices were roused.

After some experience of his new work, Father Dignam writes:

"The Apostleship in England will take, I expect, a long time to acquire the position it needs and deserves. It has suffered heavy accidental discouragement from a rooted suspicion that it was intended in some way or other to *replace* devotion to the Sacred Heart. Some of the most influential Congregations have allowed this prejudice to root itself until it is almost immovable. However, things will slowly mend—all is marching well so far as it goes at present."

The extreme prudence of the Central Director is shown in a letter addressed to one who had the cause warmly at heart.

"If you wish to propagate the Apostleship according to its true spirit, avoid all argument with those who dislike it; there are plenty of excellent

persons who are not of its spirit, and do not like its growth. It is better to leave them alone—indeed, to urge them against their own will is not to propagate, but to injure the work. It is quite possible to take different views of it, but argument does no good.

"It is, of course, certain, that this priest's imagination supplies him with facts, otherwise he could not think that the work was propagated against the will of the Bishop. Father Maher had the approbation of every one of them.

"When the new statutes were given to the work in 1879, we voluntarily abstained from fresh affiliations till a fresh approbation had been obtained, and as fresh approbations have not been received from all, they have been over and over again refused wherever that is the case. But more than that, even in dioceses like his own, in which I have had reason to judge that in spite of formal approbation received, the mind of the Ordinary was changed, I have advised the clergy to reflect, and so ultimately prevented the affiliation. This has happened in that very diocese within a month. No blessing could come on a different mode of action, nor could the work prosper against the will of the Bishops. But there is no misery, no abuse, no room for abuse unless through the over-zeal of volcanic Promoters, which is, it may be owned, now and then rather hard to check. What we have been praying for is a fresh *blessing*, not the deliverance from a misery, and the death of Père Ramière gives us a glimpse of God's providence in delaying to grant our prayer.

But to expect that a great work like this, which, even though we try as much as ever we can to throw the entire management into local hands, still must lead to an increase of the knowledge of the Society and esteem for it, and the spread therefore of its influence—to expect that that should go on without susceptibilities being aroused or prejudices cropping up, would be to forget that we are still in this world, and to dream that it was Heaven. And if you are going to flare up and be troubled because everybody does not think as you do, you may as well seal up your diploma and your peace in the same package and put them both in the water-butt. *Whenever you find people indisposed for the League, draw in your horns at once*—if you want to be a good Promoter, grave upon your memory the last words in page 57 of the *Handbook*.

"*I* never told you that enrolment was necessary in admitting to the Archconfraternity. *We* practise it for a good reason, because we know, by a sad experience, how entirely people forget an admission which has been accompanied by no external act, but (I have not the *Raccolta* by me), Maurel says, it is enough if the priest who admits, 'takes down the name.' Assuredly, if he then threw it in the fire, it would not injure the validity, and many believe that even the writing the name is not essential. In all that, of course, it differs from the League. But why on earth argue such a point at all? Devotions will never spread where the spirit of controversy reigns."

His mind was ever busy with efforts to improve the organization, and he writes to his sister:

"I fear I forgot to put the ticket of admission to the Archconfraternity into the ceremony which I sent you. I am now getting printed a similar form for the public admission of members. This was a puzzle to me for a long time; but an irascible old parish priest wrote so peremptorily that there *must be one*, and that I must send it directly, that I was terrified by his severity into a light on the subject. *Omnia co-operantur*, so though I could not make a public admission, I made a public investiture of the badge *after* admission, which delighted him hugely. I shall have it in print soon."

He was, of course, very anxious that religious communities should take up this work, and he writes as follows:

(To the Superior of a Convent.)

"I am very happy to send you the diplomas, which I am quite sure will be put into use with a pure and fervent zeal. You have all of you, thank God, gained experience now to not only believe, but to *know*, that the interests of Jesus Christ are the only things in the world worth seeking, and that if you are through weakness drawn away for a while to love other things, they must needs be renounced and laid at His feet before peace can come again to your hearts; and surely if this knowledge does not make you good Promoters, nothing will. No, for your zeal I have no fear.

"But our Lord says, you know, *sicut serpentes*, and that means so much—the end never forgotten, patience unfailing, sacrifice entire. But if you are

to do your work, if you really ambition to lift the community spirit, though it be but one degree nearer to perfect love—and to do this not as it is done in a retreat, for a time only, nor as often happens to an individual soul, but to the community as a community — well, then indeed you must be magnanimous, for you undertake a work far more precious in our Lord's estimation than the salvation of all the laymen in the land. 'Hearing this our souls are inflamed. The greatness of the reward delights our minds, but let not the struggle and the labour hold us back.'[1] If the love of the Sacred Heart is death to self, what must become of self if we are to inflame others with His love? And yet for all that, you must none of you fear, for He who has given you to wish will give you to accomplish also.

"It is hardest of all, because in a community zeal must ever be mortifying *itself*. A hundred times a day it must do nothing, say nothing, and must know how to spend itself that others may be enabled to do what we should so much like to do ourselves. As far as direct means may serve you, perhaps the most important is the promise which our Lord has made (and is constantly verifying) of the graces which He gives to those who seek to promote this devotion. It is that promise very often which first makes Religious really interested in it. They will often resolve to promote it before they have ever asked themselves the question whether they really have it themselves; but very

[1] St. Gregory.

often what begins in this poor fashion ends in something true. Then grows the desire to understand it; and admiration and the desire to know more act and react on one another. But the weak ones will fall away again and again, for at bottom self-sacrifice is the only measure of love, and, as you all have learnt, it is hard, hard, hard to learn, and the conviction is slow to come. Woe, therefore, to Promoters who have not patience, and patience with themselves first of all! In St. Teresa's communities (perhaps the most beautiful picture of the spirit of the Apostleship which the world has had since the days of the martyrs) there was not *room* for a selfish word nor a selfish thought. Susceptibilities and sadness could not enter where the longing thought of what was for our Lord filled every cranny of the hearts, even of novices. The Church, souls, sinners, because these were the interests of the Tabernacle, so wove themselves into every aspiration and so inflamed wills, that all government had to do was to restrain from excessive zeal, and charity abounded. God has granted us this image of what the cloistered life *may* be made by His Spirit to aid us to humble ourselves and see our shortcomings well, and to teach us, too, not to contract our hearts and injure Him by asking only for little things."

(To a Nun.)

"Do not fear to call wrong wrong. It is a wrong spirit which thinks the Sacred Heart or the Apostleship belong to the Society, so that others

should not propagate *both*. The gift would not, could not be all it is to men if all men could not spread it. The Apostleship is most deeply indebted to the Salesian Fathers, and to many others only less than to them; and I myself owe much to both Franciscans and Redemptorists for their zeal. Let us ever thank God and be glad when the work is preached by all, always and everywhere."

He was extremely fond of the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," which is the motto of the Apostleship and Indulgenced.

"*Adveniat regnum* means: May I be a saint. May I so renounce myself that Thou mayest reign in my heart without a whisper of a rebel voice. Therefore, if you like, *Adveniat* is the most selfish prayer of all. For, you may say, since sanctity is my highest good, I cannot seek sanctity without seeking myself. What is true, of course, is that I cannot seek sanctity without finding my highest good.

"It was to escape from this ridiculous *embarras* that quietism made its highest offering, the offer to go to Hell—and probably went there.

"The fear of Hell is (without a shadow of feeling ashamed, as if it were a want 'of truth') apostolic in one who is sincerely directing his life to promote the interests of Jesus Christ. Therefore any or every petition for the graces we feel we need, sorrow for our falls, plans, and resolutions for progress. And so long as the attraction is followed in our prayer, whatever it be that God breathes into us, so

long we are best promoting what the Apostleship asks.

"What the Apostleship is concerned with is not the particular exercises of our spiritual life, nor the actual prayers we say—but the attitude of our relationship to God in all—in a word, it concerns itself with our intention. Liberty is essential to prayer. For prayer is the breathing of the Holy Ghost, and none vary so much in the note of their prayer as do the saints from one another, and even from themselves at other times. Father Balthazar Alvarez, the type of the third degree of humility, and the master of St. Teresa, who is the type of the Apostleship of Prayer, made his habitual ejaculation: 'When Thou comest to judgment, condemn me not.'

"What really militates against the spirit of the Apostleship in our inner life is the introspection, the self-engrossment, the pondering over ourselves and our progress, which rampant self-love leads many Religious (and many who are not Religious) to waste their time in, and, along with their time, their simplicity, their peace, their generosity, their humility, their obedience, their virtue, and their souls."

To a nun he writes: "I will say Mass for your good Reverend Mother on Sunday. I owe her a debt of gratitude for the encouragement which she has given to the work of the Apostleship this year, and I am sure our Lord's Divine Heart will not fail to bestow on her a large blessing. 'Peace,' He says; 'My peace I give you,' and His peace is peace

in contradiction, but it is the surest of all for all that."

A writer in the *Catholic Review*, of New York, speaking of Father Dignam, says:

"Since 1882 Father Dignam has been known to English-speaking Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic, and at the Antipodes, as the Central Director of the Apostleship of Prayer for Great Britain, and not until the day when all men shall be rewarded according to their works, can it be fully known how great was the extent of the good he wrought in that responsible position." And after mentioning other of his good works, adds:

"But what are all these in comparison to the immeasurable good he did in quietly but steadily promoting the interests of Jesus Christ in the world by spreading a knowledge and increasing the practice of the beautiful devotion to the Sacred Heart, thereby bringing into the way of salvation countless thousands of souls that might otherwise pass through life lukewarm and negligent in the great work for which they were created?"

One of the local Directors of the Apostleship of Prayer thus writes of Father Dignam:

"Our dear friend, Father Dignam, came to the opening of our church in 1891, and that was the last time I saw him. Not long after that, he began that long course of suffering that closed his great work on earth. My experience will be found to be very similar to that of others who had dealings with him as the able and zealous Central Director of the Apostleship of Prayer. All local Directors will, I

am sure, bear willing testimony to the watchful care and zeal with which he attended to every branch of this wonderful confraternity. He was ever ready to help as far as it was possible when there were so many applications.

"I think it was this indefatigable and earnest attention to details that was one of the chief reasons of his great success as Central Director of the Apostleship of Prayer. I trust sufficient matter will be obtainable to form a little book that we may have something to keep his name and example always before us. I was always edified with the few words he wrote, mostly in reference to our work, but I did not keep them. The *Pax Christi* with which he began his letters expressed very aptly the whole tenor of his life, and his quiet, steady, calm manner of doing his great work."

In September, 1883, Father Dignam had the extreme pleasure of a visit from Père Ramière, the saintly and venerated Moderator General of the Apostleship, and founder of the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* in France. He spent a few days at St. Helens, and Father Dignam spoke afterwards with delight of the consolation and encouragement which he derived from this visit. When taking leave of him Père Ramière said, "Oh, my dear Father, the mystery of the Sacred Heart Pleading is as yet hidden from the world; let us use our best efforts to spread the knowledge."

These words seem to have been engraven on Father Dignam's heart, and if his zeal had needed an impetus, this visit gave it to him. Père Ramière's

work on earth was nearly done. He died on January 3rd, 1884.

Father Dignam never lost an opportunity of working up the Apostleship. In the midst of a spiritual letter he says: "Don't you think you might do a good work by introducing the Apostleship of Prayer into L——. It is very heartily approved of by the Bishop. I could, of course, make you a member of it, but what I am thinking of is more than that. It is the greatest means of spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart, and if Father —— wished, it could be established by diploma in the parish, and then you could open your own register and gradually gain all the people to it. Few things have the effect of working up the fervour of the people in so marked a way, and the Indulgences are very great indeed. I am very glad you have been made a member of the living Rosary; that helps the good work on, too, and now that you have a statue of the Sacred Heart, all is ripe to begin."

But he had no desire that his penitents, in order to please him, should displease their parish priest, for his correspondent was all eager to begin, whether it suited the P. P. or not, and so he writes: "I perfectly understand and sympathize with Father ——'s feelings, and it is most certainly true that a multiplicity of devotions only perplexes simple people, and does more harm than good. What is peculiar about the Apostleship is that it is an organization rather than a devotion, and can be used for promoting one devotion just as well as another. Therefore it is that it has been established in some

parishes for the very purpose of getting up the perpetual adoration; because it secures for the purposes of the priest the services of the Promoters, and he can turn their efforts and zeal to whatever he has in mind. The mere ceremony of receiving the Promoters between prayers and Benediction on Sunday evening will often awaken the attention and begin a devotion in hearts which are little affected by sermons. And wherever the Apostleship is established, the Director can obtain diplomas for any whom he has proved to have a desire to promote our Lord's honour. However, I should not like you to spread the Apostleship merely because the Father *did not object* to it, but only when he really wished it himself."

Now that he had become Central Director of the Apostleship, he was often asked to explain it to those who were most desirous of helping him in spreading the devotion, and he was consulted as to whether it were possible or advisable to propagate it among the poor. He replied: "That which underlies the devotion of the Sacred Heart is what our Lord said to the woman,[1] 'In spirit and in truth,' He says, and then, pathetically: 'the Father seeketh such,' indicating to those who think of it that it never will be the mass of men, who at the best give Him a sort of external official payment of duty, instead of the heart-to-heart gift of each act, which the morning offering of the Apostleship implies. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, then, means personal relations—the lifting of an eye which only He sees

[1] St. John iv. 23.

—the secret word in the heart—the quiet laying of a flower (or a weed) at His feet—the bearing of cold or pain, or harsh words, or neglect, or labour for Him. All this can, if you are resolute, be put into very plain words, because the thing is in reality natural to the poor, though they cannot say it and do not know it, and to them you must never say more than *one thing at a time*, and cannot be too particular on that point, for it is the one special reason why much instruction is thrown away."

(To the Same.)

"The certificate of the Archconfraternity needs no signature, the extra line is merely a mistake. Promoters can admit people in any part of the world, and you may send your certificates to Ireland. Jurisdiction is only concerned with granting Diplomas of Affiliation; I could not do that in Ireland, but I (or you) can admit individually. The idea of offering all and always in reparation is perfectly right and natural, and you may certainly do it. The best Life of Blessed Margaret Mary is that written by herself, which is at the end of Père Gallifet's book on the Devotion to the Heart of God—the first, and by far the best book ever written on the subject."

One of his religious brethren[1] who was closely connected with him in the work of the Apostleship, writes as follows: "The Apostleship of Prayer made steady progress under the thoughtful management

[1] Father Egger, S.J.

of Father Dignam, though it took a few years to live down some prejudices and misconceptions which prevented not a few from availing themselves of its advantages. Men of business looked on it as a sort of complicated devotion only suitable for those who had too much time on their hands. Others said they belonged to enough confraternities already, and could not undertake fresh obligations. Many priests did not care to introduce fresh work into their parishes, having already a variety of associations; others thought it was new and untried; some, that it was foreign and unsuited to English circumstances, tastes, and characters. And the most surprising of all was, some declared that it would hinder devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; others that it would injure the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart. Father Dignam's first care was to set forth, clearly, what the Apostleship of Prayer, its object and its method, really were. He, therefore, lost no time in printing a small handbook which was chiefly intended for local Directors and Promoters as a book of reference."

When Father Dignam was preparing the *Handbook of the Apostleship*, he wished to have the morning offering put into verse, and the Sisters S. M. G. undertook to ask Lady Georgiana Fullerton to write one. This was done; but, as Lady Georgiana had not mentioned our Lady in the verses, she was asked to write others.

Father Dignam wrote: "Do not let that kind Lady Georgiana labour under unnecessarily hard conditions. The Pope's words in the statutes are:

'In order to gain the Indulgences, they ought to add to their morning prayers the oblation of their prayers, work, and sufferings of the present day for the intentions for which Jesus Christ offers Himself in the Sacrifice of the altar.'"

Father Dignam afterwards wrote: "Here is an unexpected blossom from the old Egger bush. You see only the first four lines are essential."

Lady Georgiana said she would make a second attempt, and the Father remarks:

"If kind Lady Georgiana gives me one better than Father Egger, I shall use it directly, but I am using his at present."[1]

Lady Georgiana's lines were not in time for the *Handbook;* they were afterwards published in the *Almanac of the Apostleship* for 1890.

(To the Mother General, S.M.G.)

"The little book is in the press at last, and will be out on January the 1st. It is called *The Little Handbook of the League of the Heart of Jesus,* called the Apostleship of Prayer. I shall be glad if you can write a notice of it for America, and I will send you proof sheets for the purpose. Do you not think it possible to secure copyright, and I might send two or three thousand copies over at once; I should hope, through the Notre Dame nuns there, to effect a good sale. Perhaps, also, an *abrégé* of what you write, might be sent to an English magazine. I think I shall be able to get Healy Thompson to write also; and others may be found.

[1] See *Handbook*, p. 48.

Advertisements might be secured for it. Do you know if Burns and Oates do anything in the way of an advertising agency? You see I am going in for it!"

(To the Same.)

"I thank you exceedingly, but it becomes clear at once that the copyright need not be thought of—for all the printing will be done in the next fortnight. And I do not attach much importance to it, for if our people chose to produce another version of the French *Manuel*, my copyright would not stop them, and I should not wish it, if it could. As soon as the proofs are in print you will have them, and I will arrange to send a few thousand copies for private sale.

"Dr. Coffin[1] is all kindness for the Apostleship."

From the time that Father Dignam took charge of the Apostleship of Prayer, he felt that it would never make any great progress without its own organ, and it was this conviction that had led Père Ramière to start *Le Messager du Sacré Cœur*. By 1882 his example had been followed in thirteen other countries.

There was, indeed, a *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* in English, but it could hardly be called the organ of the Apostleship; it was rather a religious magazine, and, on account of its price and its literary style, of limited circulation.

Father Dignam's idea concerning the *Messenger* was twofold. In France, besides the *Messenger of*

[1] Third Bishop of Southwark.

the Sacred Heart, price fivepence, a penny magazine is also issued, called *Le Messager du Sacré Cœur de Marie*, and this plan is also followed in America. His design was to publish his magazine at one penny, making it a thorough organ of the Apostleship, and at the same time bringing it within the reach of the poor—"the great majority of Catholics, the sons of toil, the artisan, the labouring class."

Father Dignam burned with the desire to spread the devotion of the Sacred Heart among the busy, toiling mass of the poor. He was made Central Director in 1882. In 1883, the idea of a change was mooted. He was from the first encouraged by Superiors to hope, though some urged that the Catholic poor were not given to reading. The existing magazine could not be prudently suppressed at once, or taken out of its able editor's hands without due consideration for his feelings and interests.

Meantime, experience only increased Father Dignam's conviction that a penny *Messenger* was needed. He prayed and sought the prayers of others; he put his trust in that promise of the Sacred Heart: "I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings." He placed it specially in the hands of our Blessed Lady, and it was on her name day in September, 1884, that he received the commission from his Superiors to begin the penny *Messenger* in 1885. He writes a few days afterwards:

"I have been saying the 123rd Psalm: 'Our help is in the name of the Lord,' for at last I have entered into my inheritance—*Dixi nunc cœpi*—and

God will supply the money, and the wit, and the subscribers."

Father Egger describes the pains which Father Dignam took to insure the financial success of his undertaking.

"For days he was busy with the *Post Office Guide*, with letterpress type of various sizes, samples of printing papers, twine of various thickness, and a pair of scales, weighing different samples of paper covers, wrappers, &c., and calculating postage charges, so as to give the greatest possible amount of printed matter at a cost which would enable him to issue his penny edition."

He was greatly perplexed as to the number to print, as he had not the remotest notion what his circulation would be. At last he resolved on the expensive experiment of stereotyping, and the result proved that he was right.

Father Dignam determined to deal little through the publishers, but to send copies to subscribers who had paid their subscription beforehand. To this plan he firmly adhered, though we believe it had never been attempted before, and by this he avoided loss and almost insured success.

Some of his friends tried hard to help him by procuring subscribers. The Sisters S.M.G., of course, tried their best, as was their bounden duty of gratitude. He writes on November 14th, 1884:

"My child, a word to thank you for your kind zeal, which is doing us such splendid service. The little words have been seized with avidity.[1] . . . You

[1] Short anecdotes or quotations for "filling up" in the *Messenger*.

have been raining subscriptions on me, and I am glad to tell you that for the last two days they have been coming in thick from all sides. It was time, for we have not, I think, completed our second thousand even yet. B—— is invaluable to me, and I scarce can guess what would have happened if she had not insisted on making her visit. She is a perfect little woman of business, and gives no trouble. As regards stories, simple narrations of an edifying event, or stories bearing quite directly upon the one main idea is about all that we can do with."

. . . . . .

November 19.—"Thanks again for the subscription, we are making steady way. God bless you, my dear child, accept my gratitude for all you have done."

(To his Sister.)

"I am feeling my way in my new trade, and they have bought me a new writing-chair to hold up my back. Pray for me; pray for me, child, that my heart may burn, and have no other refreshment than to weep for my sins."

The new series of the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* appeared at the end of December, and thus the desire of Father Dignam's childhood to bring out *a penny book for the poor*, was fulfilled at last.

On January 2nd, 1885, he wrote to his sister:

"I have only praise as yet, but the candid friends generally wait a little. Many who like this first number very much will be displeased when we

address ourselves more directly to our work with the poor. So I am well prepared for grumbles.

"You will be glad to hear that subscriptions have been pouring in."

It was strange, indeed, that the editor of the new *Messenger,* who had placed his undertaking in the hands of our Lady, should, immediately after the appearance of the first number, be summoned to Toulouse on business, and from thence be able to make a short pilgrimage to Lourdes, the place of all others to which his heart would have led him, that he might lay the first fruits of his work, and all his hopes and fears for the future at our Lady's feet in that favoured shrine. He did not forget others, but wrote:

"I am not going so near to our Lady without getting to her feet, you may be sure. About the 15th I hope to be at Lourdes, and I will be your messenger. After the great intentions of the Apostleship, the blessing of our Lady on the work and the miseries of my own poor soul, I shall have nothing so much at heart as those who, by their candour and docility, have forced me to answer to our Lord for their souls, and the debt of gratitude I owe to those who have prayed much for me."

He was greatly edified with the Fathers of the Society in France, who were then suffering sorely from persecution. He writes:

"The journey was marked with touches pathetic enough, for the poor Fathers are hidden away in all sorts of corners, and their hospitality was a thing never to forget. At Paris, at Limoges, at

Toulouse, at Pau, at Bordeaux, churches all sealed up, residences empty, and yet men as calm and cheerful as if all prosperity was theirs. I went out with Father Provincial to the Tertianship, some twelve or fourteen miles from Toulouse, and though it was bitter frost all the time, they began at once to *light fires* in our honour—not a fire to be seen in the place till we got there. That is one of the few houses which have been overlooked and left undisturbed. The union of thought and spirit was something very delightful indeed, and they were as proud of my little red *Messenger* as if he were a full-grown periodical, with a history and a career of his own."

(To his Sister.)

"Toulouse.

"I shall be in the Grotto, I trust, by five o'clock this evening, and shall stay all to-morrow. If I am a bit pressed with business here, I am still more pressed with kindness. It is as though Father Carrère himself had no occupation so important as that of spoiling me. I am furnished with the best recommendations. I shall begin my retreat on the 2nd. I shall have five hours in the train to make all my arrangements with our Lady, and have everything complete on arrival. It is time for you all to pray much for me. May God bless, and our Lady hear all our prayers."

(To a Spiritual Child.)

"I value what you wrote for me, which, mind, I shall lay at our Lady's feet with the most entire

conviction that she will take entire charge of the realization of every word of it. I shall read it to her myself word for word, in your name, so let no trouble nor embarrassment weigh upon you or make you sad. God will assuredly guide all for the best. I shall say Mass, please God, to-morrow and Monday, at the spot where our dear Lady gives so many graces. I have not time to write to anybody else, so you must be the messenger of my love to the Fathers.[1] God bless and strengthen and enlighten you.

"Tell the dear little Sisters[2] that I wish a hearty 'God bless you' to them all, and that I shall remember them very particularly at the Grotto."

(To the Nuns of Notre Dame at St. Helens.)

"Notre Dame de Lourdes,
"January 19, 1885.

"Now I have done my best, and you must do the rest amongst you. I spent yesterday in the snow, and it was not cold. Our Lady is good; may her love grow in us as long as we live.

"A. D., S.J."

(To his Sister.)

"And in the deep, deep snow I set off for Lourdes. I was the only stranger there, I think. I had a long hour in the Grotto that night, and on

[1] At St. Helens.
[2] The Sisters S. M. G. at Providence Hospital.

Sunday, except during the splendid services in the Basilica, I was there. It is one of the features of the place that you do not get tired, and I learnt there that the love of our Lady means humility and penance. Certainly our Blessed Mother knows how to make one ashamed of oneself. Happy hours, unlike all other hours, they will remain, I think, well remembered, and always by themselves. I said Mass both days in the Crypt, and happily without any one waiting to follow, so that I was able to make my memento at my leisure."

Father Dignam's love for Lourdes never ceased. He writes on another occasion to one who was about to make a pilgrimage:

"I thank you, indeed, for all the good wishes, and am delighted that you are so happy as to be one of the destined pilgrims.[1] Truly you can do nothing more in accordance with my desire than to go as you say for me. Take my heart with you, and ask our Lady to make it less unworthy to belong to her. Beg her to wash it clean, to fill it with tears till it is broken with sorrow for my sins. Ask for it light, strength, constancy, and fire, that I may do all our Lord wants of me, and hurt Him no more. And that I may do nothing that she does not begin and end in me, and which does not spread the love of the Sacred Heart in His creatures more and more."

An account of Father Dignam's visit to Lourdes was given in the *Messenger*.[2]

[1] To Lourdes. [2] Vol. i. p. 65.

When he returned from France he went to Manresa House, Roehampton, to make his retreat, and from thence he wrote:

"It needs to have seen the poor Fathers in France to know how to thank God for His blessings on our English Province, and it moves me to see the long ranks of novices and *carissimi* in double file as they enter the chapel or refectory. May He only grant us the fulness of St. Ignatius' spirit, the fire which He desires so earnestly to see enkindled."

Father Dignam's sudden departure for France was the cause of great grief to one of his spiritual children, who was about to enter a convent, and who had earnestly desired to receive some parting counsels from him before doing so. He writes to her:

"It is pain, only pain, but it will be the more precious in our Lord's eyes and in your own, for all your life in religion, that the blessed Sign of the Cross has been stamped upon your first step on the road to the perfect love of Jesus Christ.

"My prayers for you, child, will not be of less value, but of more, and the parting counsels I should have given you will be more than abundantly supplied by the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost Himself.

"*You never can lose by suffering*—it is, after humiliation, the most precious thing the world contains, and it is certain that no amount of good counsel could be to you in your future life such a firm foundation-stone as the bitterness

which God has sent you in His love to close your worldly life, my poor child.

"May God bless you—may God give you strength and wisdom and true humility, and may He make you patient and happy through the long trials by which strength and wisdom and humility are gained."

When C—— went into religion, she left her mother quite alone in the world, and to this latter Father Dignam wrote:

"I am not forgetting you in your loneliness. Most keenly I am realizing how great the pain and desolation are, and how, perhaps, even Almighty God Himself, who alone can truly comfort you, seems to hide His Presence. He did so when our Blessed Lady offered Him *her* child on Calvary, and so if He does so now to you, we know—certainly we know—that it is no mark of any want of tenderness or sympathy. You must make our sweet Lady the refuge of your pain, which it will be her delight to gradually turn into solid and lasting joy—for no earthly offering can equal what you are giving, nor bring so much glory to God. But I want you to realize carefully how jealous our Lord will be of your dispositions *now*, while the wound is fresh. If you are generous and humble, He will never forget it, and I trust you will give Him this exquisite honour without an *arrière pensée* of the least bitterness at being left, or of discouragement about the time to come. The pain is the sowing time. 'Going on their way they went and wept, scattering their seed, but returning they shall come

with joyfulness.' And so, please God, it will be with you. . . . The Divine Heart be your comfort."

While Father Dignam was at Lourdes, praying in the deep snow at the Grotto, one whom he greatly esteemed was passing from earth.

Lady Georgiana Fullerton died January 19th, 1885. He writes a few days afterwards to the Mother General of the S.M.G. nuns:

"I know that poor Lady Georgiana's loss is an irreparable one for you and a deep pain boring down to the quick. Indeed, I grieve along with you, for she is a loss to the Church and to the world."

Towards the end of this year, Father Dignam also brought out a little prayer-book, called the *Holy League Prayer-Book*, containing devotions for the public meetings of the Associates, and also for their private use, and this little book also could be procured for a penny. Father Dignam wrote an article about it in the February number of the *Messenger* for 1886. An indelible impression had been made upon his mind during his visit to Germany in 1873 by the use made of a prayer-book in German churches. It is the custom in Germany for everyone to have a prayer-book, and all join in responses to the priest who reads the prayers, and Father Dignam says: "To listen to priests and people at their prayer-books seemed to us almost the lesson of a new revelation between God and His children." He followed this system in the arrangement of the *Holy League Prayer-Book*, and the way in which he brought in the Act of Hope of the

Ven. Claude de la Colombière is especially admirable. Nearly all the responses are the repetition of the text of which he was so especially fond: "In peace I will sleep, and I will rest, for Thou, O Lord, hast wonderfully established me in hope."

He writes in November, 1885, to his sister: "It is delightful, of course, to have your appreciations of the little book which I am now receiving from other quarters also."

At the close of 1885 the Mother General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, with two companions, set out for Rome, with the view of obtaining the examination and approbation of the Constitutions. Father Dignam wrote:

"I hope God will bless your holy work, and I join my prayers with yours most earnestly for it."

Shortly afterwards he wrote:

"I should dearly like, if I could see my way, to get the Pope's blessing on the little *Messenger*. If he only knew into what far out-of-the-way corners it is poking itself—from Auckland to Aberdeen, from the Rocky Mountains to the Zambesi—I think His Holiness would give us a good one. If I were to have the volume finely bound, I wonder if you could find someone to give it to him. The Portuguese have given him theirs, but then they have ambassadors and people."

The Sisters hastened to execute the wishes of the Father, and the first volume of the *Messenger*, bound in white silk and gold, with the Papal Arms stamped, according to custom, was presented to His Holiness.

Father Armellini, S.J., wrote the petition for the blessing at the foot of a large coloured picture of the Pope.

The blessing was bestowed on January 23rd, 1886, and the picture was immediately forwarded to Father Dignam. He wrote: "The precious picture safely arrived last night, and must always remain the monument of an everlasting service which you have rendered to the work. I beg you to tell Father Armellini that I am deeply grateful to him for his painstaking charity in remedying my blunders and enabling me to obtain this great favour. We shall have the picture hung in the church, at least for the present." He then added: "You will only have completed your act of charity when you have let me know the expenses to which I have put you." The above words are quoted because the like remarks constantly appear in Father Dignam's letters.

Whenever anyone undertook a commission for him, however trifling the expense might be, he never forgot it—a delicate trait of character somewhat rare.

The S.M.G. nuns, having presented their Constitutions and transacted necessary business, were intending to leave Rome after Christmas, when the Cardinal Vicar (Cardinal Parocchi) sent for them.

His Eminence said to the nuns that he had heard all about them and their Institute, that it was just the one that he wanted in Rome, and he wished them to found a house in the Eternal City.

"I shall see the Holy Father to-morrow," he

continued, "and I will speak to him about you. Come back to me on Monday, and I will tell you what he said."

Accordingly, on December 21st the nuns returned to his Eminence. As soon as they entered his presence, he said: "You are accepted; you are blessed; you may begin at once."

When the Sisters heard these words, they felt that the will of God was too clearly manifested for them to doubt that it was their duty at least to begin a foundation in Rome and try their best to succeed, though they had many misgivings and knew it would entail numerous sacrifices; and they felt sure that Father Dignam would say they could not act otherwise.

The Cardinal Vicar wished them to make their residence in what is called the English quarter of Rome, and added:

"You will see that God will bless you, and that your work will grow and increase to what I desire it to be."

In this his Eminence proved to be a prophet. In a few months' time, a generous benefactor, in a most unexpected manner, purchased a large house and made it over to them as a freehold gift. By the following Christmas the Sisters were able to open a public church, to the great delight of his Eminence the Cardinal Vicar. He himself dedicated it to St. George and the English Saints, and ordained that English sermons should be preached therein and confessions heard in English. Also, according to his wish, they began a day school for girls and

little boys. It now numbers two hundred pupils, and is well thought of in Rome.

Italian mistresses, holding Government diplomas, assist the nuns, and thus they are able to help in the great object which the Holy Father and the Cardinal Vicar have so much at heart—of preserving the Roman children from the baneful influence of a godless education. They also visit the poor and feed a number of poor people daily during the winter, through the generosity of a benefactor, and give instruction to converts and others, &c.

This foundation in Rome gave Father Dignam the greatest joy. He wrote on January 2nd, 1886:

"Indeed, with all my heart, I pray God's best favours on you and your children all, on your new house and your old ones and on the all-important work you have in hand. Events march quickly, indeed, in Rome sometimes, though it is not generally thought so, and many will wonder at such a speedy acceptance of the Institute."

The Church of Holy Cross, St. Helens, fine and large as it is, was greatly lacking in interior decoration, ornaments, and vestments, and during Father Dignam's residence there, and while he was prefect of the church, much was done to remedy these deficiencies. After the sanctuary of the high altar had been decorated, and a new and stately tabernacle had received the Blessed Sacrament, he turned his attention towards setting up a shrine of the Sacred Heart, and to this purpose a small side chapel in the north transept was devoted.

It had no ornament save two fine stained windows; but, under Father Dignam's hand, it grew into a gem of rich and rare beauty. All this was effected gradually; and, while it was in its beginnings, the S.M.G. nuns had formed the design of having a picture of the "Sacred Heart Pleading," painted in Rome, and given to the central direction of the Apostleship of Prayer, as a thank-offering to our Lord, and a token of gratitude to Father Dignam for all he had done for them. They at first thought of introducing into this picture the face of a little statuette which Father Dignam had lately procured from Munich. This represented our Lord kneeling, and the mingled expression of majesty and sweetness in the face is exceedingly beautiful, but Father Dignam wrote:

"We must not photograph the statuette—I gave an engagement on that point. Moreover, you must recollect that the position of the head would not allow the face to be seen except in extreme foreshortening, it is raised so high, and that attitude would not be, I expect, suitable for a picture which should be set on high. We could not do with the statuette at all until we found a *low* situation for it. But the man who painted St. Ignatius' eyes at Monserrato, will surely be able to do a good thing. Tell your little ones that I wish them beautiful gifts from the Divine Child's Heart, that shall make them kind and humble, and devoted little Servants of His Mother all their lives."

The artist who had painted "St. Ignatius' eyes"

was Professor Gagliardi. To him the nuns applied, telling him how they wished their design carried out, and he undertook to execute it. Our Lord's robe was to be white—Father Armellini suggesting this — as the only view we have of our Lord in Heaven is, when He was in white. *Exceeding white as snow. So as no fuller on earth can make white.*[1]

The Sisters having given Father Dignam an account of the happy way in which the feast of the Annunciation of our Lady (the special feast of their Institute, when the Heart of Jesus first began to beat), had passed in Rome, when the Cardinal Vicar came to their house, and Father Whitty, S.J., preached the first sermon, he replied, "I am in admiration at God's ways in dealing with you, and we must feel confident that the Madonna will bless the house in Rome."

Father Dignam wished the nuns to procure for him a very large bronze crucifix. This was rather a difficult task, and while they were in the midst of their researches he gave up the idea. They sent to Holy Cross a large figure of St. Peter, modelled after the life-sized statue of him in St. Peter's Basilica, and they also procured a great number of relics, and had them placed in very fine reliquaries. These were so much admired that the authorities, who fixed the relics, would not give them back until they had figured in the Exposition of Relics, which takes place annually one day in Lent, in Rome.

"No, the dream has passed, and like most of them, a very silly one it was; but the bronze Christs

[1] St. Mark ix. 2.

which come from Rome are sometimes so exquisite that for a moment I was carried out of home by the thought of them. The bronze corrodes in clots, and crusts, so that unless there is a fairly wide plain surface which can be wiped daily, it is doomed, and a crucifix is the most hopeless of all. St. Peter, I hope, we may preserve, by establishing a tradition of keeping him clean. Silver things do not *crust* in the same way as the bronze, but they lose their colour in twenty-four hours, and require not merely wiping, but thorough polishing. We must only have wood, and I do not think you have any advantage for that in Rome. I am deeply grateful for the solicitude with which, with so much on your hands, you have interested yourself in so many troublesome commissions for us."

Up to this date the office of the *Messenger* had been in London, where the secretary resided; but it had now become evident to Father Dignam that the office must be under his own eye, and a small house opposite Holy Cross Church was taken and arranged for this purpose; and Father Dignam wished to have this house blessed, and a little ceremony held.[1] The day was fixed for the 3rd of May, the Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross, and it so happened on this day the Mother General of the S.M.G. nuns was with her companions admitted to a private audience with the Holy Father, and their first care was to ask a blessing from His Holiness for their dear Father and for the office which was to be opened that day. By this

[1] *Messenger*, vol. ii. p. 173.

time Professor Gagliardi had finished the picture, and it was taken to receive the blessing of His Holiness. The Pope was so delighted with it that he said: "Do lend it to me. I want to have it copied; it is so lovely," and it was with some little difficulty that the enraptured Sisters persuaded him to accept it.[1] The artist painted two replicas of this picture, one of which was sent to England for Father Dignam, and the other is over the altar of the Sacred Heart in the Sisters' Church of Saint George and the English Saints, in Rome.[2]

Soon after the return of the Mother General from Rome she went to St. Helens and gave Father Dignam fuller details of the events there than could be conveyed in letters. He was full of joy, and said it reminded him of the words of Scripture: *A lamp despised in the thoughts of the rich is ready for the time appointed.*[3] As the nuns were going on to Ireland, Father Dignam said, "Pray try and do something to revive the Apostleship in Ireland."

He always loved Ireland and the Irish for their faith and love of God, and felt sure the devotion to the Sacred Heart would spread among them rapidly, if means were taken. The commission was accepted, and the nuns' first step was to apply to the Director of the Children of Mary in Gardiner Street.

"The Apostleship," said the good Reverend Father; "oh, yes, I am sure we are affiliated;

[1] *Messenger*, vol. ii. p. 185.

[2] About a year after this Professor Gagliardi died. Many of his masterpieces are to be seen in the churches in Rome. His two nephews who studied under him are excellent artists.

[3] Job xl. 15.

there is some paper about it framed in the sacristy, but nobody here seems to mind anything about it." Father Dignam's prayers were, of course, going up for their success, and so the Father promised to bring forward the subject at the next meeting of the Children of Mary. The president, the late Mrs. Atkinson,[1] took it up warmly, and in a few weeks there were five hundred members.

Before leaving Ireland, Father Dignam's emissaries were successful in arousing the Apostleship in more than one Irish county, and before very long a flame sprang up from the ashes and ran like wildfire all over the country. They also applied to Father Cullen, S.J., and soon afterwards he took it up warmly and became Central Director for Ireland. On their return to St. Helens they found the replica of the picture had been forwarded from Rome, and the Sisters had the pleasure of presenting it to Father Dignam. He looked at it in silence; the expression of his face they could never forget; and they saw that he could not speak from strong emotion. He greatly loved this picture, and speaks of it twice in the *Messenger*, giving the account of the beautiful triptych in which he had it framed,[2] and of its removal to Wimbledon.[3] The Sisters found Father Dignam looking very unwell, and soon afterwards he had a breakdown and was sent away from St. Helens for rest and change.

[1] So well known in Dublin for her charitable and literary works. R.I.P.

[2] *Messenger*, vol. iv. p. 171.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. ix. p. 324.

(To his Sister.)

"I am very glad you have had so good and solid a retreat, and you must tell your dear Mother that I will pray my best for every blessing on the momentous migration.[1] God grant the blessed traditions may be carried safe and well preserved. It is in His hands alone, as you may well imagine I am thinking of you all very much to-day (the feast of the Sacred Heart), and thank God the thought is all joy. The Master will have had many a consolation, and amongst them many which are promises of consolation greater still—*et actu et delectemur et fructu*—'Rejoice in their operation and their fruit."[2]

(To the Mother General, S.M.G.)

"I read the *Sepolte Vive*, and thought it admirably suited for its purpose. What it lacked, it could, perhaps, scarcely fail to lack—the vivid touch with which, when telling me you conveyed the idea of wretchedness and row associated with the new quarters assigned to the poor things by the Government. I am at last, thank God, *much* better, and shall go home, I hope, next week with my head in perfect order."

The S.M.G. nuns, while in Rome, had obtained a Papal permission to enter the celebrated Convent of the Sepolte Vive (buried alive) nuns. They were

[1] Our Lady's Priory at Haywards Heath was just about to be founded from Bruges.

[2] Collect, Mass of the Sacred Heart.

received, without any previous notice, with much kindness by a bright and happy-looking community, who showed them their beautiful convent, with wide corridors, good-sized cells, large refectory and chapel (part of which is opened to the public, and wherein many benefactors lay buried), their garden full of orange trees, and the beautiful cemetery. In the community-room they were introduced to a number of Augustinian nuns, who had been expelled from their convent by Government, and thrust into this one. And that very day the *Sepolte Vive* had received notice of their expulsion from their convent, which they had held for two centuries; and their destination was to a tumble-down house in a noisy street, with a scrap of garden overlooked by crowds of neighbours. The poor nuns asked the English visitors if they could speak for them to the Prince of Wales, and ask him to intercede for them. He had once entered their cloister, using his privilege of being of royal blood, and brought with him one of his daughters, then a little girl; and he was so kind and pleasant, the nuns said. Afterwards an article was written in a paper, which was shown to his Royal Highness. The result we do not know; but, in the end, the nuns did not go to this wretched house, but to a much larger and better one, with garden, in a far quieter part of the city. These nuns are of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. Their Rule is not so austere as many others. They do not practise perpetual fasting—their name, "Buried Alive," is a sobriquet given on account of their not having any *grille* in their parlours, but

speaking to visitors through a sort of narrow aperture, so arranged that it is impossible to see anyone at either end. They receive visits from relatives or friends very rarely.

(To his Sister.)

"I am fast getting well now, and feeling, as is, I suppose, inevitable, a bit of a hypocrite, as I find idleness becoming so pleasant. In a Scotch paradise, with the hills all round me—a place of wonderful beauty, buried in roses so dark as to look, by some lights, almost black, in a delightfully Catholic family. My hostess, whom I received into the Church some fifteen years ago, an amiable and accomplished woman, two gay girls, just fresh from Roehampton, one of whom, a young Amazon of *twelve*, drives a pair of spirited horses to take me to Mass in the morning, where my host serves the Mass in his kilt with his bare knees on the floor. A large community of Sisters of Mercy from Dundee are housed, for the holidays, in an empty house on the estate, to draw breath after their work in the poor schools; and their chapel saves me from a longer journey before breakfast. So I hope next week to resume work with a full complement of health, and, pray God, grace as well.

"It was a grief to me to have to so prolong my holiday; but everybody's kind advice seemed to urge the same thing—that it was the better part of wisdom to do it well while I was about it. I pray for the dear little family at Our Lady's Priory, and now for the coming voyage of those who are to join them."

(To a Religious.)

"I have been ill, as you know, and it is rather weary work getting better; but, at least, it is God's Will. I am thinking of you all to-day (the feast of the Sacred Heart), who are trying to make His feast ALL that He asked for. God bless you, my dear child."

He was always anxious to lead those who were practising a spiritual life, and still more those in Religion, to be unselfish in their prayers. He writes to a nun, who was overwhelmed with grief for the loss of her brother, as follows:

"March 25th.

"I have been saying Mass for your brother's soul, and thinking it must be very sweet to die on this day—*His* day— *qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de cœlis et incarnatus est* . . . I have so many appeals for help—foreign missionaries, downcast and not knowing where to look for aid; priests in temptation seemingly above their strength; dying souls feebly struggling with the devil's last effort to keep them in his power; poor mothers trembling lest, if they die, their little children will lose the faith; and oh! the touching petitions of the poor, lest, if work come not or debts cannot be paid, the little home should be broken up and the loved ones all scattered. And as I was reading all this, this morning, I said that if *you* might see these things and all that our Lord's love can do with the sufferings you are bearing for Him to bring timely

aid to each and every one of these necessities, you would not feel that your sorrows—no, nor any sorrows offered to His Heart could ever be borne in vain ; and there is not one of the seeds you sow in tears which is not being gathered up in sheaves of joy."

Towards the end of 1886 the Fathers S.J., in Australia, gave Father Dignam notice they intended to bring out their own *Messenger* in 1887. The cordial welcome he bestowed on the newcomer gave great gratification to the Fathers.[1]

When the *Irish Messenger* made its appearance, in 1888, by an unfortunate mistake no previous notice was given to him. His only remark was, " About this *Irish Messenger* I do earnestly hope our Lord will bless it and make a real thing of it."

But some of his friends were vexed about this blunder. He writes to one :

" It is all wrong to be angry with the *Irish Messenger*. Nothing has been done which I should not have joyfully helped to do, and there is not the least intention nor even thought of displeasure. I only regret that I did not know of it in time to announce it in the *Almanac*."

Father Dignam was one who lived his

> Life for others
> With no ends of his own.

His views were always supernatural. An ecclesiastic of high position was adverse to his work.

[1] Vol. ii. p. 356.

He wrote to a friend: "I am indeed happy that he has been so kind to you. He has absolutely refused me, and will hear nothing of Apostleship nor *Messenger*, which I trust will bring a blessing on the work."

The nine volumes of the *Messenger*, which were edited by Father Dignam, are indeed a true memorial of him and breathe his spirit in every line. He wrote indeed only a small proportion of its pages, but every line passed under his eye, and fitted in with the design which he carried out with persistency and consistency. He expected and obtained that all his writers should act from high principle, and be willing to have their articles dealt with as seemed to him most for God's glory. A remark that he made about the first number of the *Messenger* held good with him to the end.

"Of course there is nothing which I have not tinkered and spoilt, as my way is. The hardest work I have to do is to cut things down, till there is little but their heads and tails left, and not always that."

When once asked by a friend to have a serial story in the *Messenger*, on the plea that it would increase circulation because people would buy the magazine to see how the story was going, he replied: "'Tis exactly for that reason that I will never have a serial."

The advent of the new *Messenger* gave an immense impetus to the work of the Apostleship.

An idea may be formed of this by considering the number of certificates of admission issued. In

1881 these had amounted to 2,500, including Ireland. In 1886 the number issued, *excluding* Ireland, was 48,000.

Father Dignam's next work was to bring out the *Almanac of the Apostleship*. The first number appeared in 1887, and the following extract from the Preface is well worthy of notice:

"We publish our *Almanac* with no other object than our Associates' good: to console some, to stimulate others, to inform all, to aid all. The experience which has been obtained during the past year, of the good done by forming in the lives of the people a real *habit of prayer*, has conciliated much sympathy and interest. *For prayer* is to-day *the supreme want of the world*." And much indeed did Father Dignam do to induce souls to seek and to use this remedy for all needs and all sufferings. He did much more to help the poor (and many others besides the poor) than if he had been a great philanthropist for their temporal needs. As time passed on Father Dignam was constantly bringing out leaflets and pamphlets to explain the nature of the Apostleship.

To him also we owe the several forms of the badge in English, and the bronze cross of the Promoters. He also set about forming the Apostleship Library, which had two divisions; the first was a collection of all books bearing on the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and especially any rare copies of books now out of print. The second was the publication of works on the same subject, such as the one by Père Croiset, and others. The S. M. G. nuns

had made a translation for him of the treatise of Père Gallifet, to which the following letter refers, and they were also often able in Rome to pick up for him copies of the books he wanted to procure, and they had proposed to translate some of Père de la Colombière's sermons preached in St. James' Palace before Mary Beatrice when Duchess of York.

"I am pleased with and grateful for the MS. How far it may need alteration for the purpose which I have in view, viz., the accurate rendering of the original Latin, I cannot, of course, judge now, but it is certain to be of inestimable value whenever, or if ever, I am able to realize my wish. I cannot object to the foot-notes, which at least sometimes may be of great use. As it is as yet an altogether untried experiment what circulation the *Messenger* will provide for works of a larger kind, it is premature, no doubt, to anticipate about Father de la Colombière, but the translation of the sermons can scarcely fail to promote the propagation. We shall see. If the *notice historique* is of a manageable length, it might be very suitable for the *Messenger*.

"Thank you for the trouble which you have taken about the list of books. My particular wish was to know if any of the more valuable works bearing on the Sacred Heart had been translated."

The organization of the *Messenger* cost Father Dignam immense labour, which only those employed in similar work can rightly understand. His anxiety to prevent the poor people from paying postage caused him to invent the system of sending large

numbers by parcel post at a cheaper rate, so cheap that, as he expressed it in the *Messenger*, it was "shearing the sheep very closely." But Father Dignam in no way "wrote down to the poor." He would never have agreed that it was necessary to do so. His *Messenger* was intended for all classes of society—for all who wished to promote the interests of the Heart of Jesus, and to learn more about the love of that meek and humble Heart.

It is necessary to study the price list of the *Messenger* Office to form an idea of the industry with which he employed every means which he thought could in any way promote the Devotion. Leaflets to explain its nature, the Twelve Promises of our Lord, the large and small Intention sheets, the Morning Oblation, the forms of ceremonial, the Nine Offices, and many others, and printed oleographs of the Sacred Heart and our Lady. Then he enlisted music and singing in the cause, often inserting pieces of music in the *Messenger*, some of which have been printed separately.

Great pains were taken also with the Rosary sheets of the second degree, *i.e.*, those persons who, besides the Morning Oblation, undertake to say a decade of the Rosary daily for the intentions of the Holy Father. These decades are made up in sheets, with circles of fifteen, and a small blank space was called by him the Promoters' Corner, containing about fifteen lines of some holy, consoling, and encouraging thoughts. All this was not accomplished at once, but spread over a certain number of years, each one bringing to light one or more of these inventions of his untiring zeal.

CHAPTER VII.

Correspondence with Religious Communities.

"They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity."

Father Dignam had a great reverence for nuns. In his eyes a spouse of Christ was, after a priest, the most sacred thing on earth. He knew the generosity that their vocation requires, and how they never fail in undergoing hardship at the call of duty. Therefore he longed to see them attain a high degree of interior sanctity. He was jealous for his Master, that they should in very truth give their whole hearts' love to Him, to whom they had vowed themselves in the face of the Church on earth and "all the celestial court." He writes thus to a Religious: "Remember we belong to God, are consecrated to Him, our bodies are His, and as such are worthy of reverence, therefore we must guard them. Let us look at St. Agnes and her bridal.

"The Church sings in her Office: 'He hath betrothed me with His ring, and as a bride He hath adorned me with a crown.' She was so full of her bridal, she is always the bride, the bride of Christ, and so full of the idea that her martyrdom was her *bridal day*, and how she longed for it."

Father Dignam, in his great desire for his sister's perfection, and fear lest there should be too human a side in her affection for him, proposed to her that they should drop their correspondence. She replied that she felt sure she saw God only in his direction, but that, if he thought otherwise, she was ready to make the sacrifice. He replied:

(To his Sister.)

"My dear Child,—Of course, when you can write about our correspondence in that way, all my fears must go; and I cannot thank God earnestly enough for all He has done for you. Your quaint scruple about *choosing* the better part amused me. Why, child, it is a counsel. How shall we embrace them without a choice? Everyone aiming at perfection would *have* to choose it, to be consistent, unless God's providence called them to the active life. What I said was meant to persuade you that God's providence, in your case, was now ceasing so to call you, and leaving you free to choose. About purity of mind, my words only frightened you because they were too brief and too hurried. Susceptibility to flattery or wounds, all these are yet but the rudiments of what is to be watched and conquered before perfect purity of mind is seriously aimed at. St. Catharine of Siena saw *only souls*, as you have been reading—a triumph of mental purity in one unusually gifted with a sense of beauty. But she had said, *toto corde*, what the *Imitation* says in that little prayer I spoke of—'Draw me away and deliver me from all unstable comfort of creatures.'[1] It is

[1] Book iii. chap. 23.

most sweet to see how truly identical the doctrine of that most wonderful Saint is with that of St. Ignatius; quite a vista of the Spirit of God; the form all different; free and poetical as the spirit of St. Dominic is, yet in its kernel, identical, as I say, with what, drilled, marshalled, and methodized like a Macedonian phalanx, is found in the Exercises. God bless you."

(To a Religious.)

"If St. Ignatius himself were to become your master, his teaching would profit little, *unless it were God's hour*. I have never seen, as it seems to me, in any soul so much pride with such genuinely sincere and humble dispositions, and it makes me think and hope that it *is* God's hour. You will ask, 'Where is this pride?' and the only answer, 'Everywhere,' gives no light. Though humbling yourself assiduously and in all you know, you are self-complacent all the time. Self-reliance, self-vindication, self-esteem, have a chamber, and there is 'engaged' written on the door. There are not many to whom I would say so; but you *have* learnt to fear nothing while God is with you; and if there is any truth in what I say, it is only that far, far greater love and grace are coming than have ever come. Trust and pray. God bless you, my child."

(To his Sister.)

"Don't forget to say a *Magnificat* for me, for I was nearly leaving the monks at Tenterden without their retreat. A train ran into ours at Tunbridge;

and a fat old gentleman sitting next to me was thrown with his nose against the other side of the carriage. No harm was done, except to engines and carriages, and an hour's delay. *Deo gratias.* God bless you, my dear child."

(To another Nun.)

"Remember that every one, everything, is worthy of reverence in the religious life: persons because they are the *Brides of the Lamb*, and how can I, a wretched creature, slight or despise or contemn those whom *He*, the Infinite Purity and Goodness, has chosen and drawn so specially to Himself? Strive to be, according to the *Imitation*, as the 'mud of the streets' under the feet of all. Think of yourself as that, try to realize it, to be it, and then you will attain reverence. Woe betide one who has not reverence—reverence for people, customs, all."

He always spoke in high terms of nuns. Among them he said there are to be found "such heroic souls," "such grand women," "souls capable of such great sacrifices." Communities were praised —in one house there was "such an interior spirit;" in another, "such a spirit of charity;" in a third, "such noble self-denial;" in a fourth, "a childlike spirit;" and so on.

He seldom found fault with nuns. Once he said of two, strangers to him, who had called on a begging expedition: "I saw they were not going to be simple, so I cut the interview short." He had a horror of

worldliness, or a spirit of policy among Religious, or any looking down on others.

In a convent where he only gave one retreat he met a nun who was the subject of much admiration on account of her high mental culture. Unhappily she had an exalted idea of herself, and held others cheap, including her Superior, "a gentle, meek Religious," said the Father. So he told this nun to apply to herself the words of à Kempis, i. 19, 4. The advice was ill-received. Some years passed away, and of that nun it was sadly said, "Her place is empty."

He writes to one who was preparing to enter Religion:

"*Beati simplices.* I am not sorry that, as you say, you get horribly discouraged sometimes, since you speak of temptation, and the supreme lesson of life is to bear with weariness of self. You will not be worth your salt afterwards unless you have used the present as those do who make it their joy to do God's will. It must not surprise you that the eyes have seen so much; they will see so long as the interior observation is devoted to external things, but this will be cured gradually, and I don't want you to go so far as to be less useful or agreeable. Cana is the model of course; when you go to see things, look at them. Will you please learn thoroughly that the fruit of Communions received is quite cheerful conformity about Communions denied? There is too often a great deal of selfishness in Communions, and no better test of it than the cheerfulness of our resignation when they are

lost. Take careful heed of this, or you may find yourself on remarkably short commons unexpectedly. The whole thing is, however, put in a nutshell by your: 'When I do wrong I feel so wretched.' Humpty Dumpty is a speaking type of those who long to be good for their own satisfaction, the commonest delusion of all. Did I not tell you that after a fall, the first thing is to be assured that it is good for me—I have sinned; have mercy upon me—then *a contrite and humble heart, Thou wilt not despise*, and lastly *Dixi nunc cœpi*.[1] You say, 'in a few minutes all traces of my act of the presence of God are lost, *so that I cannot really have made it thoroughly*.' Don't you see the pride? St. Thomas Aquinas did not think so. He says, 'The subsequent distractions do not interrupt the prayer.'

"If your meditation has fed your mind, don't fret that it has not been practical, at least when you did not see your way to make it so.

"Don't be greedy of remembering everything every day, even though it would have helped you. You do not trust enough to the Holy Ghost (*suggeret omnia* our Lord has promised), though it is not a bad plan to take notes to read over in times of review, so as not to lose sight of lights received altogether.

"The practice of purposing in our Lady's honour to let no one leave me without having done what in me lay to make them happier, is not, of course, the sum of self-renunciation, but it is, perhaps, the healthiest practice of it at the present time. The

[1] "I said I have now begun."

hidden life finds its culminating point, no doubt, in the *insuper et animam suam*, when we have courage to pursue self to its closet in the heart, where no one else can go, and 'not to be friends' with it there; but it is a living death—a more painful martyrdom than can be inflicted from outside, and a pack that your shoulders are by no means broad enough for yet, who have only just begun to play at beginning to dig the foundations of a true humility. Oh, when those impatient cravings after the greater things come to you (and they *are* graces, though full, full, full of ignorance), do not let them pass without insisting on seeing whether indeed you have used the occasions. There are two ways of giving way to inordinate affection, and the first is, when we seek the pleasure for the pleasure's sake, not for the good we may obtain from the cause; and the second, a subordinate kind of inordinateness is when we dwell on the pleasure we have received afterwards. Therefore, these two we must guard against, these questions we must ask ourselves, but ignore the vague fear of the possibility of these motives."

To the same after she had become a nun:

"The atlas has been useful already. It was the favourite meditation book of Father Ramière, and a famous one it makes, especially for those whose taste is to 'do it largely.' Is not that a nice modest prayer that you ask me to say to our Lord for you? He has answered me as He so often does, by another. He wants me to say it to you. 'Ask her to do it largely.' That will mean, I suppose, two different things—one in general, the other in detail;

one in the scope of your life, the other in its practice; both hard, both golden, or He would not ask. Unless you grasped the Apostolic side of your vocation, it would not fill your heart, and the thought of the pleading Hands, held out to receive the merits you have earned for Him, to distribute into the hearts of sinners, since you sang the last hour, is the very summary of a cloistered life, making it the richest, no less than the most tranquil of all. 'My handmaid Cecilia, like a busy bee, serves Me.' Yet all the time we know well that these treasures, which He waits for so longingly from us, if they are to have weight, must mainly be victories over our own hearts—*and his own soul also*, as He expresses it; and we know equally, if we can trust our own experience, that prepared we must be to find ourselves at His feet, and not unseldom, not with victories to offer Him, but with defeats to deplore. To do it largely then, what does it mean? Nothing it seems to me is greater in the creature, than to bring her zeal undimmed, her courage unshaken, in the midst of the smarting consciousness of the baseness of the hour just passed, and with every disguise torn off from self-love's shoulders, to see ourselves in the truth of our meanness, and to long for His glory still. If it be true: *The love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself—love of Jesus and of truth*, then it seems to me that these two things together go to make the sum and scope of your life—done largely in detail. The danger of a nun's life is littleness; indeed, if what I have called its Apostolic side were not grasped, that result

would be inevitable. But there is a second danger, subtler far; I mean in our hatred of littleness, despising those we think little, and so falling into the most odious littleness of all—self-preference.

"God give you a long life, for you have nothing less than a long life's work to do. No model more perfect, nor more beautiful than Blessed Margaret Mary can you have, of what He means when He asks you now to do it largely. You shall keep your name in my Mass every day; only be true to the Sacred Heart."

(To the Mother of the Same concerning her Daughter.)

"The question how to love—how to love?

"The ways are different for each; as self-love, which is the one only enemy, is in each different. X.'s predominant passion is ambition, its converse and cure is the love of self-abjection, which, however, means nothing for her till she has learnt (what is hardest for her to learn) how this self-abjection in her must needs be spiritual. Love of, contentment in, her own spiritual abjection, contentment in the sorriness, in the unwillingness to take trouble or to try hard in the precious little joy or pain, in the selfishness and ignorance of gratitude. Nothing less than contentment in all this, so as to freely offer to be this till the end—the very end—if only by this she may be nothing and He all. This, and this alone, is how to love. . . . The test, then, is joy, contentment, unweakened hope when things are

worst, that by that very worst, self may be killed and our Lord have His place at last. To give our Lord our frank sorrow for our wretchedness, and then let it trouble us no more, is truest humility."

(To another Religious.)

"Lay your poor little head down at our Lord's feet, and ask Him to lift it to His Heart. Own your weakness cheerfully, and tell Him you are too little to offend Him greatly, and that He must wash everything wrong away in the floods of His love. God bless you! God bless you! and all you wish, and all you try, for His dear sake."

(To a Nun.)

"My Child,—Mystery as it is, you have never been *taught* to suffer nor to prize the dignity and value of suffering, nor to understand that this dignity and price depend on the sufferings being those that God chooses for us, not those we would choose instead. You have loved Jesus Christ well and truly, yet you have not learned what it is to give Him an unquestioning tranquil holocaust. You have yet to study the fifteenth chapter of the third book of à Kempis, and I wonder if even you have found strength in the great triology on desolation. All strength comes from the thought of God; all weakness from dwelling on self. You will think I am asking what is impossible in desolation. It is not impossible. With a little experience you will know it is not. Had you insisted on the effort to follow Him from the Garden to the Tomb, without

one reference to self, you would have spared yourself much and given much to Him. This is the *nudus nudum Jesum sequi*, which will let a healthier air into your soul in time of sorrow.

"I offer to the Sacred Heart, in your name, three things. The first, a sincere will to immolate self in everything, with a conviction that self is an unknown abyss which even years of humble fidelity will only slowly and partially discover.

"The second, a sincere abandonment to Him of my *way* of serving Him, leaving to Him the choice, sure that it may be the contrary to what I desire or think of, and wishing nothing but His will.

"The third, that without listening to the cry of my lower nature, He will accomplish His glory in me, neither more nor less, nor this nor that, *only* His all holy will."

(To a Nun of the Good Shepherd, who was dying after long suffering, and who begged to hear from him.)

"Very well, she shall have a word, though, perhaps, our Lord would be as well pleased that she were altogether in His own hands. This dreadful physical suffering is for a purpose; it is part of her vocation; it gives her an altogether special share in His Passion; it is her reparation for sinners, and will buy graces for them such as she cannot imagine now. It is dreadfully hard to bear, but I think—I know—she is a willing victim, and would not ask to

be relieved, because she knows that her pain is buying souls for the Sacred Heart to delight in. Ask her when she is dying to pray for priests, and tell her I beg of the love of our Lord the very best gift which His Heart holds, and of Our Lady of Sorrows to comfort her as she likes her best-loved children to be comforted."

(To a Religious.)

"To-day I am losing one of the best and bravest of my children, little Mary Vavasour, who is dying (Mistress of the Penitents at Hammersmith) of half-a-dozen mortal diseases, but with a light heart. For more than a year she has not been able once, through dropsy, to lay her head on a pillow, and has done immense work all the while. Now she will rest. Say a prayer for her—Mary of the Blessed Sacrament she was called."

Father Dignam wrote to the Nuns of the Good Shepherd of this nun, "she has been taken away at last, but what a crown! the dearest, noblest little soul I knew;" and, later on, he wrote again to one of the community:

"I commemorated my dear little child to-day with great affection. You will know how I have felt with you in that which is so great a loss and yet so great a deliverance. Poor, poor child, how she suffered. I pray for her earnestly. I am not one who thinks because a soul has a very, very high place with God, it therefore has little Purgatory;

and yet I hope that the exceeding nobility of her love for our Lord will over and over again have washed her as white as at the hour of her baptism.

"God bless you and all, my dear child."

Father Dignam's power of sympathy was much appreciated by nuns. An elderly Religious once said to him, "Father, you are the only priest I ever met who seems to understand the trials of *old nuns*."

(To One Suffering from Severe Bereavement.)

"Ah, my child, God is good indeed to give the grace so to live and so to love that His holy will softens even the last separation, before the inseparable meeting in His Heart. God bless you. I will pray."

(To a Nun.)

"When we have got to that state of mind that we look upon ourselves as the 'mud of the streets,' under the feet *of all*, of *everyone* around us, that we honestly think everyone above us, *then* we are on the borders of true peace.

. . . . . .

"When a reproof wounds there is sure to be *some* foundation for it. If you are accused unjustly, or accused of mean, low motives, never answer back; in most cases we are quick to answer, 'I did not do it,' and then on further thought we are obliged to confess that what was said was true; while nothing so takes aback those who have

charged us with anything, as when we simply say: 'Yes, it is quite true, and I am much obliged to you for telling me.' You must not aim at the meekness of the saints before you are fit for it, but be guided by prudence and under direction. The first step in meekness will be not to make sharp answers. You must make up your mind that the meek are always set on one side and looked down upon."

(To a Religious.)

"1886.

"My Child, have you forgotten—I think you knew it once—that all true humility is, *must be*, allied with simplicity? Well, now, each of these items of praise which you record for your greater humiliation, simplicity would pass by as by dirt. Never would she voluntarily recall them, never dwell upon them, count them, or in the remotest way refer to them; all that is to *look back*, to make the battle of life harder and your will less strong. It is all true, but unless I know *my*self wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, as our Lord said to the Bishop,[1] it is not humanly possible to have both truths in our mind at the same time vividly. I know that the tone of what I write is very much more harsh than I intend. Indeed, if I could write with full leisure, I should not wish to be harsh, for you do not deserve it in the least. There is nothing wrong wilfully, and if there were far more hidden pride than there is, one could no more blame it than the ulcer, which St. Ignatius calls it. But I think

[1] Apoc. iii. 17.

you are content to bear with my abruptness, since I am too busy and, alas, too bad to be as gentle as I would wish to be. The other point which makes you suffer is mere inexperience; you are a little child in such matters, and suffer as children do. Could you have, my child, a more luminous illustration of the invaluable doctrine of Neumayr?—'and this ought, then, to be the beginning, the middle, and the end of the work of asceticism, to correct the imagination; for, if the imagination be corrected, evil affections will either not arise or they will be easily subdued. The passions being subdued, the body will readily submit to the reason, and, the body being subject, the reason will with joy obey God.' You remember Neumayr says this. God, my child, has far other higher, holier views, and asks you to be, not what you have imagined, but what He has designed. Nothing will strengthen and purify your influence like the sublime simplicity which leaves Him, without *arrière pensée* on your part, to fashion His own tool. Your word must be, 'Take, O Lord, and receive.'

"Be generous, oh, my child. Later on you will smile as you remember what this pain, caused by your imagination, cost you. *Sursum corda.*"

(To the Same.)

"St. John of the Cross' noble spirit makes us indeed feel that immolation is the only thing possible if we are to be able to look our own souls in the face; but he had been *steeped* in what you have only tasted—the coldness and alienation of those he was

most bound to love and those he was most bound to reverence. Whenever God is sweet to you try to think how little you have yet suffered for Him.

"I was very glad you spoke to Father Humphrey, for he is so good and what he said is exact.

. . . . . .

"Magnanimous, thorough—oh, my child, what have worms to do with such words as these? and yet they will have to become daily realities if you are to go to Mount Horeb.

"It is so easy when a storm is over to forgive and be great-minded; but to *begin again to-morrow* with great-mindedness, to let littleness do its little mischief round us and yet not think little of the doers, and to go on because I am God's and He shall do as He likes with me; and because it was for this I left the world; and because *then* it is all laid up for me in Heaven eternally; and because *He* did this and more than this for me; and, above all, because I am His and He deserves it, and by it I give Him my love, and if it were far, far more, it would be nothing then, because His love means all. To go on thus for fainting creatures seems so hard and so impossible. To sacrifice myself—immolate my innermost self at one blow—would not be hard; even it would be delicious. But to go on! Dry your eyes, look up at Him and smile and kiss your hand to Him, and *go on*."

(To a Nun, after the Death of her Brother.)

"I hope you will not think my silence has been from any want of compassion for your great grief;

indeed, I should be sorry if you did not *use well* a cross so bitter and therefore so valuable. The keenest part of your pain is that you don't know how to hope (you were always a backward scholar in that lesson). Now, I should have rather felt inclined to say I don't know how to doubt, for I cannot think our Lord, who chose to make your brother the object of such long, persevering prayers, will have failed to give him their fruit at last. This is, I think, the view that is most honourable to our Lord, and certainly most likely to be true. After that must come, surely, the old act of utter, absolute, all-embracing submission and resignation to God's most blessed will, the memory that His love for souls is greater than ever yours can be, and *that love is honoured* when we are forced to trust it in the dark."

(To a Nun.)

"I think you know it is quite a mistake for you to take such a desponding view of yourself. It is true, no doubt, that you are very weak and soon grow tired of your efforts to be good, but God knows better than you how soft the clay is which you are made of. If, then, instead of looking uselessly back upon the past and uselessly forward into the future, you will but stick to the 'rule for little people,' do your best *now*, humble yourself at your faults, renew over and over again your purpose and desire of pleasing God and *never doubt* His patience, you will find to your own surprise some day that you have grown more steady, more humble

and more loving in your work for Him. Do not fear your retreat, even though you may seem to have but little light or consolation; it will be sure to do its imperceptible good in your soul. Remember that our Lord loves you with a degree of love with which you have nothing to make a comparison, and is more anxious to make you happy than you even are yourself to be so. When you are weary, then do not think the time lost which you spend, even with nothing to say, if your eyes are on His wounded Heart. He has chosen you and you have chosen Him, and that is happiness enough for a life if you keep your gratitude alive. God bless you, my dear child."

(To a Nun.)

"You feel that weary disgust — like our Lord did, entering on His Passion. Do not regret that He lets you share with Him. After that, blush, because so many poor priests suffer that bitterness when souls *fly from them*, and you experience it when our Lord brings them to you—they, when wills are obdurate; you, when they are docile. . . . Suggestions of ennui and disgust with a mission pregnant with glory to God and profit for generations of souls—these are temptations which it does not do to deal softly with. You must not count your life more precious than yourself."[1]

[1] *Animam meam pretiosorem quam me.* (Acts xx.)

(To One under Strong Temptation.)

"Oh, it is good for you. What would you have been if our Lord did not beat you — or, rather I should say, bare His back for your blows?

. . . . . .

"I shall say Mass in honour of St. Catherine of Siena, with a strong commiseration for you. Have no mercy on your disgusts. See that they come from inordinate affections—useless looking forward —and self is always underneath.

. . . . . .

"I ask God to tell you the cause of your sufferings. How much comes from Himself, how much from something unseen and unconquered, of bad and base in your own heart, and our Lord, in His own time, will tell you all about it. I have more ambition for you. No mere conquest over this—but that the conquest should be so an affair of the past, so entirely accomplished and done with peace and joy, as to become the very stage, the floor, the foundation of all your work for souls, and I even think that this is God's desire. Therefore, as you may judge, I am keenly anxious in all that concerns it. God give you His grace, that you may know yourself. Happily you are in His arms, who knows better than we the time and the way, and who can do all things."

His labour for this soul was not lost. Two years later he writes:

"Your letter—and letters are becoming rare things—is, I confess, very delightful reading. It is

a comfort to find a soul which labours to be conscious of its faults, and yet whose aspirations are high and large, and whose interests are fused with those of God. May He only keep ever fresh in our hearts the conviction that as Père de la Colombière says, there is but the barrier of the grace of God between us and the worst of sins.

"I read, of course, with immense interest, of the light St. Joseph and St. Francis Xavier had obtained for you, which is so great because it brings you so much peace. I know that for you this is a grace which God's love has prepared for you, and the fruits of which are to be gathered in eternity.

. . . . . .

"Oh, I am glad to see how, whenever even the shadow of an opportunity occurs, you strive to get back to and increase your union with God. I hope and believe that whilst no less prodigal of your energies to do all you can for souls and for the community, you are really less affected by selfish temptations—larger and more detached. Had there been anything which really was an impediment to peace, I should have heard of it.

"I shall not be quite happy about you until you are safely back in your nest and the retreat over. But I am quite sure our dear Lord will see to everything, and give you grace to begin a *golden* year."

(To the Same.)

"It is a great good to have gained experience of the pain which the children of God can cause one another, without yielding to the judgments and

resentments which nature gives birth to. If we had no better motives for reverence and charity than the perfection of our neighbour, the virtues would not be worth gaining; instead of stopping to weigh falls and weakness, look at God, and go on. Only keep a keen eye on the ever-rising self-esteem; show that no mercy. God will love you, my child, more and more—but you must *pray*.

"I have a young client here looking for another situation, who is, I think, very recommendable. She is an orphan, but has good connections, who are Protestants."

(To a Religious.)

"You speak of lighter reading. I suppose you will find me growing very savage in my old age; but I really believe it is happier to give it up. If you can, recall a time when you not only did not indulge it, but had forgotten to wish for it—that is what I should consider most enviable for you.

"Reckon it up; Religious, cloistered Religious, old too, and whose office is purely spiritual.

"Is it not certain that smatterings of the opinions and the events we have read must affect us, both in parlour and at recreation? Indiscretions and vanity must have a larger field; but what is more, such reading detracts from the calm, sincere indifference with which we regard the world, and, therefore, lessens the depth and pure sincerity of our supernatural views.

"There is, indeed, one point on which, of course, all must be interested in what goes on—the interest

of the Church. I should like you to feel as St. Teresa did for all that concerns *her*. But she had no *Months* nor *Tablets*, not even a *Messenger ! !*

"When you do what I suggest, you will find how very soon other things grow more interesting, and leave much more fruit in the mind and heart afterwards.

"How long is it since you read one of the four Gospels through? And then, how many, many books there are which one is the better for ever for having read.

"God *love* you, as an old woman from County Mayo said to me. . . . The confessions of our holy Father (St. Austin), I should think, *anyone* would read with profit.

"About your poor soul, as you call it. You know I never expect much light to be the fruit of the inquiry: Am I making progress?

"The spirit of mortification is not exactly your strong point, it is true, and it is true also that we are not on the verge of sanctity exactly till the spirit of mortification is there. Still there is much to encourage, much to be grateful for. You have at least a *sincere* eye for your faults, if not always a very keen one, and I would rather you went on in peace, humbling yourself at and fighting what you see, and striving to live in the present and make full days than that you teased yourself about what God has not given you light to see. Nothing helps us so much to think profoundly little of ourselves as to be made aware that there are worlds of holiness in which others walk, but which we have not only

never set foot in, but have not even been permitted to see. We shall be better prepared for eternity if this is a familiar thought to us."

(To a Procuratrix.)

"I am very glad at the quiet, indifferent way in which you take the change, which, however, was only what I expected of you (for an *old* nun who is not indifferent is a dreadful object to turn away one's eyes from). Mind and do not let your pots and pans take you away from your union with God, and let worry and hurry, as you say, be Gog and Magog to you. Take pains to see God and serve God in the details of the work, and then you will dread all commotion. Reflect, and use few words, and keep close to our Lord all day long. See that in the plainest commonsense view of the words, He is everything—His interests are all—and so put your whole heart into the cry: 'My God and my all, Thy kingdom come,' even when most immersed in your sugar basins. Of course, so far as our Lord in His goodness gives the thought and motive of reparation, that is sure to add a new and separate and inestimable value to everything, and makes sacrifice more easy. Only with regard to bodily strength, which *must* be husbanded, prudence is charity."

(To an Infirmarian.)

"One thing at least God permits to be evident —that the infirmary does the infirmarian good. And presently He will give you still more light

to pounce upon the very beginnings of those little reveries in which the temptations are hatched. It is necessary, I do believe, to grow old before we can detect how very subtle are those tiny indulgences of self-love. And when our Lord is bent upon entirely purifying and denuding a soul, He allows even very transient thoughts about ourselves to be fruitful in disquiet. When upwards and onwards is understood, it becomes a very crucifixion. Selfishness gets out of breath for want of a little sulk, and craves vehemently.

"Do you know the true meaning of *solid* virtue? It is that which is exercised easily, habitually, copiously, without struggle or with struggle which is easily suppressed—virtue acquired, possessed, exercised as you would reading or counting ten. And we easily grow old without acquiring many virtues, from mere instability of will.

"I would read Didon without troubling about the opinion of others.[1]

"There *are* in his treatment of the Divine childhood and early years, passages which no Jesuit would read quite heartily. It is only a way of speaking, after all, and you would read your book in better peace, I think, if you did not notice it. All acknowledge it is sublimely beautiful."

His sister's eyes were affected, and she was forbidden to make much use of them. He writes to her:

"Our Lord has tried you strangely with your

[1] Père Didon's *Vie de Jésus Christ.*

eyes, and I am in admiration at the graces which He has given you. But I hope you will dearly prize the blessed idle time, for if He asks busy work of you again, it is sure that the quality of it will depend upon the purity with which you have cultivated this green oasis of the hidden life, with which to feed your soul for thirsty days to come. I think, too, that to absorb into one's spirit the full spirit of the Apostleship—the spirit, I mean, which made the heart of St. Teresa beat with every pulsation of our Lord's—thought and leisure are greatly needed. True love is never satisfied without details, and true love of the Sacred Heart loves the details of His interests. Not merely fidgety and feverish interest in particular individual cases which come before us; but interest in classes of souls, and the details of temptations, and miseries and sufferings which souls undergo. To be content to heap all these together without consideration is, it is true, what most *must do*—but it is not what personal love would most wish to do. And amongst all other details of temptations and miseries, mind and do not forget mine, my dear child."

After a time this blindness grew worse, and the Father wrote:

"Your news moves me strangely, and I am at once prepared for all and know it—know it to be a grace of the very first importance for your soul; but it is, indeed, an immense trial, a privation which only He who inflicts can alleviate. My poor child, oh! how I shall pray that it may be *all* for you which His love means it for. And truly the ground

has been well prepared. I do not believe you half know how great the grace is which He gives you to take your humiliations well. All that is wanting is a little more indifference as to whom they come from. Remember what the *Imitation*[1] says: 'But let this be thy great care,' &c.

"Now, my dear, I am not going to melt about it, nor must you. God loves us, and His arms are round us. Surely that is enough, and He has breathed into our hearts the lesson which shall make even *that* a thing to thank Him for and smile at—*Dominus est!* and if you become useless for everything else, you will *pray for ten.* God bless you, dear child."

Cataract had now begun, and at last she became completely blind. "I must write a word now that the crown of the cross has come. When the light goes out in the world, our Lord, who is the Light of the World, cannot absent Himself; and it is a delight to me to think how well you have kept His word: 'Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.' God bless and comfort and enlighten you."

Before her retreat, he wrote:

"So go happily into your retreat in the dark, sure that our Lord Himself will be waiting for you at the close, and that there is not one single thing in all the world, except the bad will of men, that you ought not, or do not, thank Him for.

"When He, dear Lord, and the oculist have opened your eyes again, you will see what He has been, in the meantime, preparing for them."

[1] Book iii. 49.

After long delay the operation for cataract was performed, and she gradually recovered her sight perfectly. He wrote: "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord! is signed upon us.

"It makes me feel very little and very humble and very grateful that our Lord is doing such great things to you, my ever dear child. For I am sure what He is doing to your eyes is only a little sign of what He is doing for your soul, which His interior light will make more joyfully submissive —more perfectly in love with His holy will. They all praise you, and you and I must thank Him for that, and ask Him for something better still—that His own praise alone may content you. It is intense happiness to me that you have borne the long trial so well, and that now, when He gives you your eyes back, your only wish will be to say: *Sume, Domine—Tibi eos restituo.* My own child, God bless you."

. . . . . .

"My DEAR CHILD,—We must all join in shouting out the battle-cry at the happy end of the siege, and, better still, in thanking God for the grace which has enabled you to bear the long trial with equanimity. You will, at least, never forget that sight is a gift of the Master, and that when we say, 'To Thee, O Lord, I restore it,' He expects us to mean what we say. I only hope the privation may have well trained you to that perfect use of the sense which the beginning of the Third Book teaches us so beautifully. Do you know, it is coming home to me especially that I have never properly grasped

the *Imitation;* and I hope to read it better in my retreat, and get light to appreciate its lessons more effectually. There is something terribly serious and real as one grows older in the feeling 'not yet: when then?' which I find comes oftener and oftener to me: 'Many count the years of their conversion; but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is but small.'

"Oh! my dear, pray very hard for me that the conversion may be a true one at last. 'Don't halve the eleventh hour,' a preacher said last Sunday, and I said to myself: 'That's for *thee*.' I begin to-morrow night at St. Beuno's."

(To the Same.)

"Yesterday I was still unable to write, and to-day things are not much better. I suppose I am about in the middle of my seventh cold, though I have lost count somewhat, and my head is as useful as a pumpkin. So all praise and thanks to our Lord for His goodness. I have been looking at that Magdalen ever since it arrived, at intervals. She is truly bonny and delightful. Where do these artists come from, so full of *faith and light?*[1]

"My dear, your letter was fairly a startler. I did not dream how far I was from realizing that you could not write to me till the old writing was there again once more. It had a strange effect indeed, and I felt more in an instant than in all before what a trial God had sent you. *Profer lumen*, as you say. What a prayer it is!"

. . . . . .

[1] A small picture of St. Mary Magdalen and St. Martha published by Benziger—104.

Father Dignam's advice was especially valued by many Superiors of convents. He was so perfectly loyal to Superiors that he felt he could do no good in a convent unless he possessed their full confidence.

He writes to one Superior of an ancient and widely-spread Order:

"What I want in you is more courage, more largeness, more *true* reliance upon God in the work of your charge, by which I mean the spiritual help of your children, each in particular. I should like you to feel before your retreat is over, that everybody in your community is, so to speak, a little child in your hands, and that if you fearlessly do what you think best for them, God will bless your courage, and turn even your mistakes to their good. The Church holds Superiors responsible for their subjects' spiritual advancement, and those who do not seek the advice of their Superiors, should be doubly watchful, doubly faithful, for they refuse a great grace, and are like people running a race with only one leg.

"Religious life is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and unless we are simple, guileless, dependent, candid as children, we shall feel out of joint there."

He writes to a Superior about a nun:

"I should not recommend her to keep on giving a regular account of herself to me. I should not recommend her to turn to me as long as the matter could be settled by local help, or only if, *en dernier ressort*, she knew that the way was clear."

He was once consulted by a Superior as to whether she would do well to ask that a Father, who was giving conferences to her community and not much relished by them, might be changed. He replied:

"In my opinion, it would not be wise to ask to replace the Father. I cannot help seeing that solid fruit more often comes from listening after having conquered a natural repugnance to the speaker, and I can truly say it of him in particular, from a long experience of my own — unmethodical, no doubt, still he is what Bacon calls 'a full man,' and no one will listen prayerfully without getting good.

"If A. examined herself instead of him, she would leave off being cross.

"I think it would do you all good to make a thorough meditation on the dispositions which our Lord likes to see in your hearts when sitting down to listen to exhortations. You know He is there in the middle of you, looking into every soul; picture for yourselves the sort of one He will give most to. For text take the words, 'To whom shall I have respect?' in the last chapter of Isaias."

Father Dignam did not encourage nuns having different directors than those appointed for the community, and never undertook the spiritual care of any Religious, except at the earnest request of her Superior; neither was his correspondence with nuns very frequent. He writes to one who had been for years under his direction after her entrance into Religion:

"You will please our Lord greatly if you throw

yourself with unhesitating abandonment into the hands He has placed you in, and entirely reject any hankering for direction outside. If you do this, as I said to you before, whatever may be wanting, the Holy Ghost Himself will give, and give abundantly."

Writing to the Superior of a convent where one who had been 'once illuminated and tasted the heavenly gift,' had, like Demas, 'left, loving this world,' he says:

"St. Francis Borgia used to say that he kept festival when anyone entered the Society, when they died in the Society, and when they left the Society. All these are things by which God gets honour. It is a great truth, though a stern one; it is true of you, as well as of us, and you and all ought to use it for your profit. It cannot be denied that many of us need the lesson of holy fear. If David prayed God to *pierce his flesh* with it, we can scarcely flatter ourselves that we are as anxious for that great aid as he was. To repine that it happened with you rather than elsewhere, would be to grumble at a grace."

Writing to the S.M.G. nuns on a similar occasion, he says:

"Oh, thank God for the good news. It relieves my anxiety lest she should injure the Institute."

"Poor X., I fear she has been terribly beguiled," he says of one; and of another who had acted very basely and shown very black ingratitude towards himself, he wrote only, "Poor little child." When consulted by the S.M.G. nuns, about sending away

a novice, he says, "You are QUITE RIGHT about the pious people; it is exactly the Society's idea, and you are quite right to dismiss her."

Father Dignam, of course, meant the wrong sort of piety, those who prefer pious exercises, which they like, to obedience and self-denial. In a similar case he said:

"God will deal with her mercifully when she has come to see herself *through her faults*. Still it is quite as well that *we* should be spared the providing her with exercise ground."

In giving advice to the Superior of an old and numerous Order, he says, "I should like you also to hope that God will give you the grace of being able to get into a passion when it is useful, in the spirit of St. Paul's *be angry and sin not*, so that instead of being icy, for your own spiritual safety, which is (with some exaggeration) what you used to be till lately, you may be able, with the purest and most supernatural motives, to be either very kind or very angry, according as either one or the other is a means to the end at the moment."

(TO THE SUPERIOR OF A CONVENT OF AN ACTIVE ORDER, WHERE ONE OF THE NUNS THOUGHT SHE WAS CALLED TO AN ENCLOSED ORDER.)

"MY DEAR CHILD IN J.C.,—I thank you very much for your letter, which was worthy of you. I have the very deepest sympathy with what it seems to me must be a very singularly keen affliction. I am convinced it will draw a choice

blessing upon you from the holy way in which you regard it. I am perfectly clear that no judgments, except very mature ones, and those formed on the spot, can be of the least service in the matter. I hope all will seek God's will in perfect purity.

"I have confined myself to putting before her the nature of the question, and the duties of Confessors and Superiors with regard to such."

(To the same Superior, who had just been re-elected to her Office.)

"I was not at all surprised at your news, and indeed it is not so very difficult to see the finger of God in the matter. If, on the one hand, it is desirable that there should be more than one in a community who have learnt the lessons which only office can teach, yet on the other, all the pains and troubles which come from change and inexperience are saved, and perhaps your destined successor is not ripe yet for the work. In any case, so long as God's will is purely sought and sincerely done, we have nothing more to wish for. Certainly, as I believe, it is the saving of no small amount of pain to yourself, which I make no doubt God saw would not be good for you. You must gird yourself anew to courage and large-heartedness, and be more resolved than ever to keep far from you the beginnings of all that is morbid and saddening. If God is honoured always by the cheerfulness of our service, assuredly this is more and more true as we grow nearer to the end. And you must go to our

dear Lord's Sacred Heart now resolved to get the grace at last which would be your best treasure—the grace to cordially despise self without the feeling being dashed by even a shadow of doubt of God's love.

"In the beginning of the second book, à Kempis says: 'The *love of Jesus maketh* a man despise himself. A lover of *Jesus and of truth*.' A real lover of truth undisguised, one who is content with nothing else will get this grace to see self as self is, then self-contempt must come along with it. Even if sin be not there, it *must* come, and then, and only then, is love and gratitude what love and gratitude should be. I pray for you, my dear child, though I can help you so little."

In after-years the same Superior earnestly desired to lay down her office, and was greatly disappointed at being re-elected to it. Father Dignam wrote to her:

"I am very glad you have written to me, and I quite understand the distressing depression which you are suffering so much from. I am full of compassion for you. But now I know you will be good and obedient, and I expect from you the utmost generosity in doing what I say.

"I want you first of all to kneel down on the spot, to look up to God, and say, with all your heart, 'Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty.' Then rise up and shake off this temptation—for that is what it is and nothing less—utterly.

"Go straight and tell the councillors it has passed, and that by God's grace the community

shall have its mother once more. Beg their pardon for having yielded to it, and promise them they shall see no more clouds upon your face. Order a special festivity of some modest kind, and be yourself again at least.

"So much for mere externals. You will tell our Lord quite simply how ashamed you are of having been betrayed into this pusillanimity, and deluded to think you could ever help anyone by neglecting your first duty—that of being an example to your children of bright conformity. As for your family, you must, like Berchmans, at your thanksgiving, plunge them into one of the Sacred Wounds, sure that the less you think of them or pray for them the more grace you will obtain for them. That done *in brief* and *summary fashion*, you will set all your will to pray for your own children, the Church, sinners, and yourself the worst.

"Not a moment's solicitude. Write to me in three days that you have been all I wish you to be. God bless you, my ever dear child."

(To the Same, who had a Difficult Subject on her hands.)

"You have, of course, an incorrigible subject to deal with. You have to try and save her, and with as little harm as may be to others, and this you know well, and I think you deal wisely with her, except when you are provoked, which, thank God, is seldom. I can't blame anything, yet there must be a limit to toleration, and when it comes to the

limits, she must be reminded. Do nothing, if possible, while agitated. Do your best, and don't be discouraged by any mistakes you may make.

"You feel all goodness in you unreal. Don't you see that this is against the rule I have given you?

"Be on your guard against sad reflections on your want of advancement, for that proceeds from a very subtle self-love. There is your spiritual malady in one word, so keep your eye simple, your gaze straightforward."

(To the Same.)

"When I called you hard and stern, I was not thinking of myself, but of your attitude towards yourself and God's providence. You have so much of what is right in you that it is to me a very great distress that I cannot free you from that cloud which so often comes between your soul and its simplicity and joy.

"In great part this comes, of course, from the sensitiveness which makes pain shut your soul up, and then you retreat into the solitude of your own judgment and sit down sad.

"You know already my opinion that this is great loss to you, and you know that it disappoints me.

"Partly, also, it comes from the exceeding subtlety with which you find plausible motives for reasoning upon the 'why' of God's will. I do assure you that amongst all the souls which lay themselves bare to me, I know none who discover for their own torment questions of so fine a point. Well, in answer, I have in one way or other discouraged such

speculations; but, alas! you have found no teaching in such discouragement, but rather a sort of contemptuous disregard of your soul.

"And yet it was not really this—God forbid, but in very truth, your way to light and gladness does not lie through answers to such questions; but the cure will come when you recognize that the disposition to listen to them at all is wrong. I believe if I could make you perfectly obedient to me, it would entail for a time a *great labour* on you in the persistent rejection of (what I would have you regard as) temptations to study God's intention in this and that event which happens to you.

"Now, perhaps, what I have just said cannot be found more accurately or beautifully expressed than in the first nine pages of the 'Gleanings' you have sent to me. So at least it seems to me, and yet you have made Père Caussade[1] your own author *par excellence*, and I have to tell you this the first and most substantial article of his teaching.

"Yes, certainly you may read it, but I should stick to the first chapter above all.

"I must not forget to add that I quite believe what you say that nothing interferes with your purity of intention in suffering.

"As to the question about almsgiving, I think you ought distinctly to stop any *large* alms so long as you have a deficit.

"If I have not said all you want, I shall be quite glad to be scolded and will write again.

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[1] *Workings of the Divine Will.* By Père Caussade, S.J.

"I must send a word of thanks for the prayers, which I prize more and more, as I feel more and more the need of them.

"What am I to say to you, queen of self-tormentors? My child, there is really not this inexplicable soul in you, if you would but believe me, and rest.

"The sensitiveness of self-love, which in a less God-fearing woman, would take an uglier shape, in you takes the form of this melancholy speculation; but that is all.

"Whenever you are gifted with the light to see it, peace will come quickly, but in the meantime you must be patient and docile in the dark, remembering that only God can give the light, and that without it, the wisest advice will not bring us to comprehend. Be humble, be patient, be content, and be docile to what I say. You are called ambitious; you cannot see in what way this is true. It is humility to let it alone. If it be true, God will send the light in His own time; if it be a mistake, what better than to have thus left it? It is only self-love which thus torments itself.

"Again, you are told that you have a habit of morbid speculation. If it be true, above all, if it be a habit of yours, it would be vain to expect to cure it in a day or a year. Even if it were recognized, it would probably take longer than that, but at present it is not often clearly recognized, though oftener than at first.

"Now see—it is morbid speculation to wonder in what the spiritual ambition in one consists.

Spiritual ambition is a common enough form of self-love in certain religious souls and prevents them from tranquilly bearing their faults, or the imputation of faults, till God disposes otherwise. It is the wish to be good for one's own sake. It is morbid speculation to wonder whether a soul can live without sinning; there is no doubt that those who attain the second degree of humility as a permanent habit can live without wilful sin. Bellarmine, and some others, never committed one; but to wonder whether I could is morbid.

"It is morbid speculation to wonder whether a soul which is drawn into Religion by an unresisted grace has less merit; it is more simple and more humble to accept the blessing with gratitude, and without question.

"What a morbid idea, too, to yield to, that all I can do is to avoid evil; that I cannot do good. Of course, the good belongs to God, it is true enough; but *you* can do it by His grace, of your own free will none the less.

"Lastly, and most morbidly of all, whether extraordinary favours are rare or not. Père Caussade says few are brave enough so to humble themselves, so as to kill self-love. If more were brave, these favours would be more common. It is most true, too, that high virtue is attainable by you, but to speculate about whether this or that which I experience, or have experienced, is an extraordinary favour, whether or not I am one who *ought* to be worthy to receive them—all this is dead against simplicity, and very unwholesome indeed.

"You will be able, I hope, to see that each and every one of these thoughts is USELESS in itself, and which, therefore, only temptation could induce us to indulge or dwell upon.

"The one remedy is to do prompt and brave violence to yourself when you find these ugly things in your mind, and with a bright, brave look up, to say: 'I believe, I hope, I obey: away with you.' Again, however, I remind you that only God can give light; and if, after all I have said, you still suffer from the same sad feeling, say humbly: 'Thy will be done, O Lord, and as long as Thou shalt will, only make me trust in Thy mercy and abiding love.'

. . . . . .

"Do not imagine, my child, that I think it any fault in you not to take my advice. I gave you the best I could, but am not so foolish as to imagine myself the best judge in the matter.

. . . . . .

"To regret what I have done contrary to a virtue which has come clearly before me in meditation will not make me unreal (indeed it is the right and obvious thing) *if* the regret be a peaceful, humble, and truthful one; but, of course, the spirit of astonishment or indignation at myself in the regret would indicate a root of pride sprouting. So it would always be good exercise for you in such cases to say, 'There, O Lord, Thou hast the bounty to show me what I am; for I am nothing, and I knew it not. Nor would I conceal from myself that clearly as Thy light shines now I shall probably

enough fall again. Only give me grace never to cease to try, never to lose my trust; for it is only Thy mercy that I have not failed a thousand times more than I have done.'

. . . . . .

"I was very glad to find you writing such a consoling account of yourself, not certainly that I overlook the irritability nor the inevitable pain it must give; the obstacles it puts in your children's way—but so long as you see it, and see it with courage, good will come out of it, not only for you, but for all. Perhaps a particular examen on perfect listening might prove a help to you."

(To the Same.)

"I hope, indeed, that a good blessing will have attended your triduum, and that it will have put the seal of lasting peace on many small, but precious sacrifices. It was too much to expect that all could have been accomplished without some of the common results of temptation and suffering.

. . . . . .

"The way, I suppose, in which the devil bothered you, was in representing that the insinuation was one against yourself more than against her.

"I am always glad when God lets an arrow fall on *that* part of you; the bare idea that any one can accuse you of taking care of number one is so odious to you; and so, my dear child, it is to everybody except the deliberately selfish *and* the very humble.

"But the arrow is a good arrow, and now that it has done its salutary work as a weapon, you must

preserve it as a guide. Genuine humility never thinks anything said against it is *quite* untrue. If it can see nothing, it will still expect that latent corruption will contain some of its ingredients, and so will give our Lord fresh thanks for His love, and wrap its garment of shame a little closer still and cheerfully."

(To the Same.)

"My dear Child in J.C.,—There is no intellectual defect; there is—what is natural after so many years of listening to everybody, a difficulty in surrendering the judgment; but there is nothing of which you can say, 'There is no remedy.' Try and see what a real difference there is between due examination of conscience and speculation on your own spiritual condition. The one is good and necessary—the other superfluous and *most* harmful—the one leads to self-knowledge, the other to self-engrossment—the one humbles us, the other makes us proud and indocile. The one leads to cheerful shame at the faults we actually see, or equally cheerful self-humiliation when God does not give us light to see any, and then *up and away* with an *allez toujours*. The other brings me to all kinds of vain and dejected conclusions of the 'awful monster' type—that God does not hear my prayers—that I could not expect it because of my want of good will, or, on the other hand, leads to the worst of all evils—self-complacency. Thoughts on the many inscrutable mysteries of God's providence are temptations, just like any others. If we are

subject to them, it is important to recognize them as such at once, and to know in what dispositions we are most subject to them. But once recognized, they are just as much things to be borne resignedly, and with the sure hope of gaining merit by them, as any other form of temptation. It is, of course, a great fatigue to fight them; but it is that which gains the crown. If they are not recognized, they are *let in*, and, of course, do much mischief, even though never consented to. Your vocal prayers should be said with simplicity, without troubling yourself to ask what you expect from them. The list is a long one, too long to be in any way *bound to* —so make it a point of obedience to always omit one in the day, till you can tell me that you could omit all, if over occupied with other duties, without the smallest anxiety."

(To a Religious.)

"My dear Child in J. C.,—Your letter pleases me very much, for you have wisely conquered the desire to defend yourself; and as for the one little bit of self-love, which made you throw in the word 'exaggeration,' I can easily forgive it, as I do not expect you to be quite a saint just yet. I do not mean that there has been no exaggeration, but that if you had been a saint you would have left that to me. I am very glad your eyes are open to the danger of your present charge, for overwork is an evil, even when imposed by obedience and unavoidable, as it is in your case. But there is in this, as in everything else, a wrong way of using the creature

and a right one. The wrong way is by grumbling at it, by excusing my faults to myself on account of it, and by clinging to little things (which I perhaps could get rid of) because I like them. The right way is by accepting it with hearty good-will and confidence because it is God's will, by extra watchfulness over myself because of the danger, and (I think) by a particular examen, on not losing the little bits of time between and giving *full* time to each spiritual duty, except when obedience or charity prevent. If God permits overworked Religious to lose fervour it is because they like the disorder which it causes, and make a pretext of it. No one is safer than such a one if she is aware of the danger, and therefore humble and watchful and of good will. God will take care of you, my dear little child; and for goodness sake do not speculate whether you are in the degree of perfection which God wants; for that is only self-love and the way to temptation, but do what you know and leave the rest to Him. God bless you."

(To another Superior.)

"As for yourself, my child, deal nobly with that temptation—weariness of your charge, of thought of the repose of others. Love, penitence, loyalty, humility, all cry with one voice, *lache*. To this specially bring St. Ignatius' word:

"'*Not only to resist but to overthrow.*' What would St. Paul say to you? '*Into the hands of Jesus I commend thy spirit.*'

(To another Superior.)

"By far the most important part of government is neglected if the 'many things' are allowed to trouble you at prayer. The first rule for Superiors in our Constitutions is this: 'Let him look upon it as the first of all the charges of his office that he has, by prayer and holy desires, to bear, as it were, the weight of the whole house upon his shoulders.' Before all else, strive to be united with God. Every day cast yourself at His feet and tell Him your whole trust is in Him. Ask yourself if there is anything in your heart which does not please Him. Tell Him your desire to seek nothing but His will and His glory. Put everything else out of your head while you are talking to Him, and all will go well afterwards. *But do this thoroughly*, and there will be no need to be anxious. Try to make confession day one of great compunction and penance.

"The aridity you speak of at or after confession may be turned to good fruit; deepen your sense of the sacramental grace as fervently as ever you can during your preparation, and don't easily think you have done this enough; take our Lord's Blood in your hands and heart as you receive absolution, and let It bow you down with your very lips to earth all joyous at your nothingness being thus enriched; you will mind nothing then."

(To the Same.)

"You will plead most earnestly with God's pity to grant you light to know yourself, if you realize

your own helplessness. I mean that while you are thus constantly occupied with others, thus exercising power, thus useful, a thousand meannesses, a thousand movements of selfishness and malice lie dormant because there is no object to arouse them, though they would start into strange activity if you were poked into a corner as useless and disgraced. You cannot believe too badly of yourself. Your efforts to efface yourself, to let yourself remain in the background, have been enough to show you how strong nature is. But do not be discouraged. Our Lord will be immensely touched and pleased by your trying, and if you do not weary of these little efforts (and I do not ask for any big ones at present), you will earn great graces for the day of need, if ever it should come. Moreover, this thought, this effort to free yourself from self, even if it seem to do very little, at the very least, will save you from growing blind. How often those who have in their long, young years done such pure, great work for God, grow selfish as they grow older. If you go on trying *honestly*, God will save you at least from this, and indeed He will do far more. May the Sacred Heart fill you with Its love."

(To a Superior General, on dealing kindly with Local Superiors.)

"I suppose our fundamental ideas are different. My life has taught me by so many, many experiences to compassionate local Superiors of all ages, sexes, and Institutes. I know so intimately how wearing

and painful the life is, even with ordinary kindness, and how dreadfully misunderstandings tell even upon men.

"You seem scandalized because —— said she would give her life to save you pain, as if there were something in such a desire contrary to her fidelity to our Lord; and yet in God's dear name, what could be a more true fulfilment of her vows to our Lord than to give her life for her Superior?

"My dear child, it is well known how easy it is to upset a local Superior. We have only to let off a few sharp inquiries: I hear this; What does it mean? Is that possible? Why was not I told of this?—then misunderstand his explanation and complain of his 'tone' and in a week you will have him utterly incapable of doing his work, or of explaining calmly, religiously, or reasonably, anything at all. *You have never had to do it; I have.*

"You could not wish to have a community serving God with greater innocence and edification than hers. She is true as steel."

The advice contained in this letter was accepted with gratitude and ever afterwards acted upon. The letter expressing this resolution had the following answer:

"My Child,—I dare say you can guess something of the sweet consolation your letter gave me, and I thank God and have no fear. May the feast (the Ascension) bring you happiness in the midst of your many cares."

(To a Community who were Keeping their Golden Jubilee.)

"You must not think that my silence meant forgetfulness of your Jubilee. The Masses were said with great pleasure, and I feel sure the Sacred Heart will have had joy in an outpour of grace, which will have made everyone of you not only gladder but holier too. It would, indeed, have been a pleasure to have shared your festival. God bless you, my dear children. As your experience of God's ineffable goodness grows longer and longer, may your trust and gratitude and fortitude grow greater too."

(To the Late Superior of the Convent of Notre Dame, St. Helens, who was very ill.)

"A little word which I just met with from the Curé d'Ars, *souffrir passe, avoir souffert ne passe pas*, makes me think of you, and wonder whether you are giving God the exquisite honour of a tranquil and willing resignation to all He is sending you to bear for souls. I hope so. I think He will not refuse you the grace of *bright fortitude* at a time when only grace can give it, and when it will strengthen so many trembling hearts. He loves you very tenderly while He sends you pain; so cast the past into His mercy, the present into His love, and the future into His Sacred Heart's providence over you. May God bless you, and our dear Lady be kind, my dear child."

(To a Novice Mistress.)

"That, it seems to me, was a very valuable observation—that the novices were too anxious when prayers were not heard. It goes a long way towards the root of the matter. With our large experience here of such prayers (most of them, of course, from people quite ignorant of the spiritual life), it is most interesting to see how differently souls bear trials, and what sad exhibitions of petulance and self-conceit and discouragement occur from time to time. But it may be well worth your while to refresh your memory of the latter part of the Treatise on Conformity to the Will of God, so as to set your little people in a better way of thinking. Few things test more effectually the solidity of virtue, than to find no answer coming to very earnest prayers.

"Eagerness about vocation is, indeed, the commonest snare for weak Religious; and it is there that hallucination is liable to prove most obstinate, and I am sure it is always punished, no matter whether the subject comes or goes.

"I have it in greatest dread.

"I should like your views of *everything* to be purely and solely supernatural.

"That, I think, makes a Novice Mistress powerful.

"You know I am never in love with those six thises and seven thats, which make nuns cling to bits of spiritual machinery[1] even long after the

[1] In reference to a paper of squares for marking the principal actions of the day.

steam and the fruit have died away. Let them practise it as long as they find real good in it and no longer, and mind they are definite and not vague (if they are bound to that, few will stick to it long), and ask them occasionally whether it helps meekness or charity to others, or the presence of God, or generosity and mortification, as the case may be. Don't allow practices to be dissociated from virtue, as they too often are. When a novice wants much more penance, make sure that she is interiorly happy with or without it, for want of indifference is, of course, the devil, and see that she knows that. Sometimes, for a while, it is not bad, when they want much, to give more than they want; but, as a rule, you are right to see if they go on asking, and whether, then, their interior mortification keeps up to the mark. Remember that all good penance causes joy.

. . . . . .

"About reading, there is no doubt that to have mastered one good book is more for our own souls than to have merely read many; but for those who have to instruct 'many unto justice,' as the Scripture has it, we ought to have read widely as well as deeply, or we shall be in danger of forcing others too narrowly and bigotedly into our own particular line, which, to my mind, is a great mistake.

"You must not feed your novices with *L'ornement des noces Spirituelles;* and though, indeed and indeed, I should be rejoiced to welcome a higher prayer, we must not forget that small miseries which have given trouble must be rooted out with fire

before contemplation can become the order of the day. The Rule must be loved to generosity, and self really abandoned in sincere desire, if we are to be so happy as that.

"It is quite true, in a way, that God demands very little before granting it to many souls; but sincerity He does demand.

. . . . . .

"As long as people are sleepy, no doubt meditation may be put off till after breakfast.

"Nothing will persuade me it is not a great loss if it becomes a habit, though I know that young Religious often experience the difficulty. For your own prayer, while you keep all your esteem for St. Ignatius's method, and (what, I trust, you would never be tempted to leave) your devotion to the Sacred Humanity, be *free* in the time to go as God leads you.

"*Insist* on custody of eyes with your novices. Firstly: for Edification. Secondly: Recollection. Thirdly: Charity. Fourthly: Interior life. Fifthly: As the necessary companion of self-abjection. Teach them to make it a *central point* to be like our dear Lady—to have her self-control—her modesty. As the mother with her infants—the physician with his patients, look professionally (*i.e.*, holily) on their changes and waywardness—they will improve in proportion to the *depth of their conviction. Telling* them to be humble, charitable, &c., will not make them change—only *deep convictions* can cure them. Never a correction or a sharp word unprepared—but moral courage to give a sound reprimand when the fault deserves it."

(To his sister, when she had ceased to be Novice Mistress.)

"I wished I could write to you when I got your news of your deposition from the noviceship; but, since it was impossible, I was forced to reflect enough to be grateful to God. For, in truth, I was not anxious about you, as I should have been in past days, and had no fear that you would fret unworthily.

"Under the circumstances, you had only yourself to think of; and a really perfect detachment in its unspeakable beauty and merit was the one thing that was a worthy object of your ambition.

"It is, no doubt, a reward for your unswerving devotion to the Society that has caused our Lord to ordain that these things should come, and come suddenly; and I feel the happiest confidence that He Himself has prepared your heart to get fruit from them.

"What could be a more absolute preparation for a perfectly happy death? It reminds me of the description of the Society's missionaries, with one foot on the ground ready to do the work that comes, and the other in the air ready to start for the place to which they were next sent."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SANCTUARY OF THE SACRED HEART.—THE SILVER JUBILEE.

"I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and thy ministry and patience. . . . I will give to everyone of you according to your works."

FATHER DIGNAM never rested until he brought the shrine of the Sacred Heart to completion.

When he first began, a friend asked him whether the altar of the Sacred Heart could be in any way improved. He replied:

"The altar is too sordid to do anything to. I have had a pretty design from Munich in my pigeon holes for the last fifteen months for a new altar, but have never had the time to move in respect of getting the money for it; and until the new altar is there, I think that those who love me—or, rather, love our Lord—had better leave it alone."

The first step he took towards beautifying the shrine was to cut it off from the rest of the church by an exquisite screen of carved stone, marble, and alabaster.

The solemn dedication of this shrine took place on the feast of Blessed Margaret Mary, October, 1886.

The "sordid altar" still remained, and it is characteristic of Father Dignam that he would not have a temporary altar of a better kind, but waited patiently for the completion of the really magnificent one which he had in view, though the collection of money for it and the process of erection required much time and labour. He wrote in the *Messenger:* "We have perfect confidence that all that is needed will come." "Towards the altar as yet we have not received a penny." [1]

The chapel became a great place of devotion. Father Dignam said Mass there daily, and the other Fathers often. All the intentions of the Apostleship were laid upon the altar.

A beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart Pleading, sent by a friend of the Father from Toulouse, was placed on the altar; the picture from Rome already spoken of, hung, facing this; a beautiful statue of the Dead Christ was placed underneath the altar, whilst offerings of a carpet and of candlesticks were made to adorn it, and a splendid banner, worked by the nuns of Perpetual Adoration, Wexford.

It was a touching sight to see this chapel frequented by the poor, and particularly on the eves of First Fridays, when the altar was lighted up, the confessionals attended, and numbers of the poor made the *Holy Hour* with great devotion.

There are some simple little stories connected with the shrine which afforded the Father much pleasure.

The Sister Superior of the Providence Hospital

[1] *Messenger*, vol. ii. pp. 339, 365; vol. iii. p. 48.

had a great devotion to it, and as the hospital was not then sufficiently furnished, she was short of beds. She went to the chapel to ask for them, and said to the Father afterwards: "Our Lord *knows* we *really* want them." Next day, from a totally unexpected quarter, eight beds were sent in.

When Father Dignam was collecting for the new altar of the chapel, a number of poor school children volunteered to save up, for this purpose, the scanty pence which they generally spent on sweets. The sum produced was £25.

The Father said this offering had given him more pleasure than ten times the amount from the rich.

The poor people had a great devotion to the figure of the Dead Christ, and it was so often kissed by lips, some of them rather grimy, that it soon became necessary to repaint it. When it was removed for this purpose, a poor woman was heard exclaiming, "They have taken Him away; wheer have they put Him?" These words went straight to the Father's heart, as so like the cry of blessed Magdalen: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

The English nuns at Bruges said they were anxious to have a statue of the Pleading Heart, similar to that in the sanctuary, if Father Dignam did not object. He replied: "*I* shall be delighted that you should have the replica in your houses, and only hope the artist may be able to exactly reproduce it; for I have never seen anything, to my judgment, equal to it."

In 1889, Father Dignam was most anxious to complete the sum needed for the new altar, by the feast of the Sacred Heart (June 28).

The S.M.G. nuns made an effort to help him, and it was arranged that each house should send its offering separately.

He was always so grateful for any offering, and valued it according to the means of the donors, rather than by its amount. So he wrote on the feast itself to the Mother General:

"I may have been forewarned; if so I had forgotten it, but I was fairly overwhelmed this morning by the simultaneous outpour. And really the immense liberality of the gift frightened me. I am being blessed *with money*, and somehow it makes me fidgety and full of fears. It has come to this, that I am spending a thousand pounds on the tiny chapel, and £878 are actually in hand towards it. Thank all the dear children for what they have done for our Lord so generously."

One of the first gifts to the shrine had been from a devoted friend living in St. Helens: a beautiful oil painting of the Holy Face, which was much beloved by Father Dignam, and of which he repeatedly speaks in the *Messenger*. When the altar was erected, there was some difficulty in fitting this picture in with its new surroundings.

Writing to Rome, the Father says:

"Meyer has certainly done his part for us most perfectly, as far as the altar goes. The panelling too, is fine, and the rather severe effect of it, perhaps, exactly what is best. But he has left me

with an *embarras* on my hands for the Holy Face, for which the provision he makes is quite unsuitable, or at least, quite insufficient. So I am retaliating by throwing the whole responsibility of making it a success upon him. At present, the Holy Face is shorn of all its shrine-like air, and the people, without knowing why, are disappointed."

He was not contented until the shrine of the Holy Face had received the full measure of its beauty, and the accomplishment of this gave him great delight. "The framing of the picture of the Holy Face is," he wrote, "an exquisite work of art."

In a letter to a penitent he says :

"From what you write, my child, on the subject of reparation, I wonder if you have grasped that the third degree of the Apostleship *is* reparation, and the *Sainte Face* its Vexillum ? You can do nothing more perfectly in the spirit of the work than to procure that it should be honoured, and it was in this spirit that the Pope granted us this year the whole of the Indulgences of the Confraternity of the Communion of Reparation."

Again and again, in the *Messenger*,[1] the Father gave an account of the shrine; therefore our description of it may be brief. The walls of the chapel are surrounded by oak panelling, with decorative painting above. The altar is of oak, beautifully carved and richly gilded, with real gold-leaf, which alone can resist the action of the chemical atmosphere. It contains twelve niches for the statues of saints. At

[1] Vol. vi. pp. 201, 240.

the summit is the image of the Pleading Heart. The figure of our Lady with her Child, is engraven in bold relief on the Tabernacle. In the other niches are the figures of St. Peter, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Austin of Hippo, St. Teresa, St. Ignatius, St. Aloysius, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal, Blessed Peter Canisius, Blessed Margaret Mary. The twelfth niche remains empty, waiting for the figure of the Venerable Claude de la Colombière. The statue is ready and will be placed there when, as we earnestly hope, this holy Jesuit is beatified.

Above the screen stands the image of the Sacred Heart Pleading, formerly on the altar, and outside it the statue of St. Peter. The Holy Face is opposite the entrance.

The little chapel is indeed most devotional, and many indeed are the prayers which have been offered up and answered within its walls.

To the ceiling Father Dignam devoted much attention, and with this view he wanted the S.M.G. nuns in Rome to procure him sketches of the heads of different saints, and though this project had finally to be renounced, some will be interested to know what his choice was.

He writes: "If I find the cost too great, I shall only put twelve medallions, and decorate the other squares with emblems. This is what I propose, but if there is anything you vehemently desire to alter let me know."

The names of the saints were as follows: St. Agnes, St. Andrew, St. John Baptist, St. John Berchmans,

St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Bridget, Blessed Edmund Campion, St. Edward the Confessor, St. Francis, St. Francis Jerome, St. John Francis Regis, St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Gertrude, St. Helen, St. Joseph, Blessed Thomas More, St. Paul, St. Paul of the Cross, St. Rose, St. Stanislaus, St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Veronica.

Soon after he wrote: "It is decided now that heads are impossible for the roof, and we must be content with emblems. I am reluctant, but convinced." In the arrangement of the sanctuary, Father Dignam was greatly aided by Father Richard Cardwell, who was Superior at Holy Cross from 1881 to 1891, and for whom the Father entertained the greatest esteem and affection. During this time, Father Dignam wrote of the Holy Cross community that it was impossible that there could be a happier one, or one in which he could receive greater kindness and consideration.

The *Messenger* continued to make steady and increasing progress. Of the first number in 1885, four thousand had been printed. Before the management passed out of Father Dignam's hands, at the end of 1894, the circulation had reached twenty-seven thousand. To this should be added, in a certain sense, the circulation of the Canadian, Australian, and Irish *Messengers*, as, humanly speaking, none of them would have existed if the new English *Messenger* had not succeeded, so that he was instrumental in spreading the knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart over a large area, and among a vast number of people. The Irish *Messenger*

alone sells over forty thousand copies. He was always anxious to improve the *Messenger*, and formed the design of improving its illustrations. This was no easy task, for the illustrations were to be very small, and at the same time very good. Father Dignam had the true eye of an artist and an exquisite taste, and was always yearning for the best, and in his eyes nothing could be too good for the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. So he wrote to a friend who, he thought, would be able to help him, as follows:

"Is it fair, when you are so overworked, to ask you to help me if you can? I would not, only I hope it will give you pleasure.

"I am told that D. C. is an amateur, and a truly zealous man. If so, he might take an interest in my needs, *for much glory to God hangs on them*. My *Messenger* grievously needs illustration, and no more space can be afforded than at present; but you see I have nothing but pagan blocks, and these of wearisome monotony. D. C. produces exquisite things for my purpose—head and tail pieces, as they are called—and if he would—I am sure he must have artists who would fulfil all I could desire. But I want them all to myself, my own property, and numbers of them. I mean some one or two hundred, the subjects of which I would more or less furnish, and also accept suggestions—so as to be set up for, say ten years, without any fear of excessive over-use in repetition. I should want him then to furnish me either with the designs or with the actual blocks for printer's use, which I should of course

prefer, all to be of the exact size, or at least the exact *width* of those I at present use. But not *clichés*, taken from blocks, but the originals themselves, for exclusive use; but I would make any sacrifice in respect of cost to obtain the best things possible.

"Tell me if you understand my want, and then whether you think you can aid me, or whether I had better go straight at the negotiation. Something I must do. God bless you."

His friend joyfully undertook the commission, and found an artist who was able to carry out the Father's wishes, but not without its costing Father Dignam much thought, labour, and patience. Though he was most anxious to begin at once, yet he wrote:

"Let the artist have plenty of time, poor man; it is, I fear, for him as for all others—a penance to have anything to do with me." Another time he writes: "His designs are beautiful, but it still remains to make them into illustrations for the *Messenger*."

It was not easy to please Father Dignam, and this he fully felt when he wrote: "I quite feel that I leave you very imperfectly instructed, while being at the same time very fastidious. I must only hope that it will have the effect of gaining you much merit.

. . . . . .

"What first and foremost I am anxious he should do is the Sacred Heart Pleading. Let him take the seal on the cover of the *Messenger*, and not

depart from the idea of it, which is all fixed—the erect position, the hands and the eyes raised; all these *must be*. The inscription to be, 'Ever living to make intercession for us.'"

Later on, after an immensity of pains and trouble had been taken by him, and not a little by his friend, he wrote: "Still, as you have already begun to suspect, there is quite a possibility that these exquisite engravings may prove too fine for the press with a large number of impressions. It would be quite good of our Lord, you know, to give us such a disappointment, and would be only a new argument of ultimate success."

In reply to another letter on this subject, in which his correspondent had said, "Must we then be specialists?" he says, "Yes, certainly; all good things whatever lead to the Heart of Jesus, and this it is pre-eminently the province of art to teach. When men tried to compose a Mass in Its honour, one went to the Passion, another to Christmas, another to the Transfiguration. Some called on the angels, and some remembered sinners, and the impossibility is that the *Oremus* can embrace so many thoughts. But *art* does not labour under that restriction; it can teach the relations of the Heart of God to all that is His, in little touches, which say what words are not able to express, and this is *our mission*.

"How can you wonder, then, if I am not all content when beauty is wasted (if I may say so), because this thought which is *our* thought has been forgotten. Battoni prayed so hard before he painted

his picture that our Lord (they say) came to him in the street and opened His cloak to show him. (This artist painted a celebrated picture of the Sacred Heart for the Gesù at Rome.) I want——to be Battoni, or at the least to be a *specialist*."

His friend had written to him, saying how much she suffered from the feeling of being tired out—*sec fini*, as she expressed it. He replied:

"Believe me, what you called the *sec fini* is exactly the right thing for me. When the donkey is jaded it is useless to have scruples about the spur. I am busy with an Apostleship of Study—Rosary sheets, another edition of the Handbook and Prayer Book, Indulgence Sheet, Almanac, and the November *Messenger*, so it is time for the *sec fini*."

He was always so glad to be told of any devotions to the Sacred Heart which are not generally known. The S.M.G. Sisters came across a Litany of the Divine Heart which they thought would please him, and which they had printed at their own printing press. He wrote: "This Litany is really *parfumé*. Nilles in his great work does not know it, and I should be *very* pleased to know the title, date, and publisher of the book in which you found it."

Father Dignam had been much attracted by the history of the Central Director of the Apostleship in Rome. He writes: "I am deeply interested in what you say of Padre Maresca, and I beg you to earnestly commend me to his prayers. You know we really owe the Indulgences of the third degree to him. *Gli uffizi* (the nine offices) is, I think, just what we want for the Library of the Apostleship."

Padre Maresca was looked upon by many in Rome as a saint. His worn, emaciated frame, and face full of holy calm and joy, impressed those who saw him. He seemed to be consumed with love for the Sacred Heart, and he wrote several works on the devotion, one of which the Perpetual Adoration nuns, Wexford, had translated and published in England.[1]

Padre Maresca was born in 1831, and having received his education from the Jesuits, entered the Order of the Barnabites. He came for his theology to Rome in 1854, and then began his devotion to the Sacred Heart, which he spread with immense zeal among his fellow-students. He was remarkable for his tender charity to others. In 1864 he brought out the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* in Italian, and for twenty-five years almost single-handed he managed and edited it, besides the work of the Apostleship.

To this employment he gave not only his days but a greater part of his nights, for he was often also employed in preaching, and spent long hours in the confessional. He opened a little seminary of the Sacred Heart for priests, and laid the first stone of a sanctuary of the Sacred Heart in Rome. But to his intense sorrow both projects had to be abandoned. Bitter trials and contradictions were his lot, all of which he bore with unfailing patience. He was attacked with cancer in the right arm, that arm which had worked so hard for the glory of the Heart of Jesus, and which now became an instrument

[1] *Heart to Heart with Jesus.* London: Burns and Oates.

of torture. His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was very great, and he said his Mass long after the very putting on and taking off of his vestments had become an agony.

He went about Rome with his arm bandaged, and when some one asked him if he had hurt his arm, he replied, with a smile, "Oh, no, it's only a cancer," and he went on to the very last dictating letters and articles, though constantly interrupted by a frightful cough.

On Wednesday in Holy Week he received the Viaticum, and then, anxious not to lose his Communion on Holy Thursday, he fasted the whole night. And according to the beautiful Italian expression, he passed away "with the kiss of the Lord" at three o'clock p.m. on that blessed feast.

It became very difficult for Father Dignam to keep up with his correspondence, and he writes to his sister, who was kept waiting longer than others:

"I must own I am a very bad father to you; indeed, if I were to believe what I am told I deserve no praise from any of my children.

"I am a poor, painful, plodding creature, who takes, I think, twice as long to get through my work as another would, so that the gifts of health are wasted, which others who are denied them would use to so much better purpose.

"I have been preaching at Wigan, where the Apostleship had fallen into a sleepy state, and badly wanted rubbing up. This morning at a five minutes' visit to the Convent of Notre Dame, I had the five-

and-twenty Sisters smiling as I told them all they had to do, and *would* do, before I came to see them again. It is the most Catholic town in England, but we have only two of the four or five churches affiliated."

Again he writes: "I wish I were not so busy or, at least, I *would* wish it unless God wished otherwise."

In reading Father Dignam's letters it must be remembered they were almost always written under great pressure. He regretted this exceedingly, as he always wished to prepare his letters carefully.

It is hardly necessary to speak of Father Dignam's loyal devotion to the Holy Father. On the occasion of His Holiness' sacerdotal Jubilee in 1888, and again at the episcopal Jubilee in 1893, spiritual offerings were sent from the Apostleship of Prayer, and this entailed much labour upon the Father. So also did the consecration of families to the Sacred Heart, and also the spiritual offering from children to St. Aloysius on the occasion of his tercentenary.

Albums filled with the names of children were forwarded to Rome to be placed on the altar over the tomb of St. Aloysius in Rome. At this time a nun having sent him a picture of St. Aloysius, he writes to thank her "for my beautiful Saint,"[1] and continues, "I believe, you know, the tercentenary has a *mission* to eradicate the *legende apocryphe* (as a writer in the *Études* calls it) of his severity at recreation, an idea which had no other foundation

[1] A photograph from an old print.

than one or two occasions when he received rather tartly flattering references to his former worldly grandeur. I like the expression of this picture, and find, like other really good things, that it grows upon one.

. . . . . .

"I never have any fear that our Lord will have less than His own way with you. You have learnt to cherish sorrow for sin, and no one who has learnt that can ever fail in courage—the courage needed to face the fact that our way to the Sacred Heart is through failure—the *regia via*—He asks of all; and you could not be happy were it not so; but you cannot doubt, you cannot fear, for He asks nothing."

Father Dignam did not think the *Messenger* ought to be a vehicle for charitable appeals; and in nine years he only made two exceptions to this rule. The first was one which went straight to his heart, and is entitled in the *Messenger*, "Our Lord in distress." A Sister of Charity in Bulgaria described the terrible destitution of some Catholic churches in that country, in one not even a tabernacle to shelter the ciborium,[1] and others in an almost equally unprovided state: towards this appeal £166 15s. was collected, and fifty Masses were said for the intention. The second appeal was entitled, "Hunger in India," and was an appeal from the Jesuits of the Madura Mission, where, in the famine, the people were absolutely starving: for them the sum of £110 14s. was collected. Though the *Messenger* did not collect money for the English Martyrs'

[1] *Messenger*, vol. viii. p. 131.

League, Father Dignam lent the advocacy of his strong and powerful words to its promotion.[1]

In 1888, when the Holy Father celebrated his sacerdotal Jubilee in Rome, a party of pilgrims from St. Helens went to Rome and were present at an audience accorded to the English on January 10th. One of the pilgrims was the benefactor[2] who had built Providence Hospital for the Sisters, and the expression of devotion on his face as he knelt loaded with rosaries and medals at the feet of the Holy Father impressed those who saw him. He caught cold on the journey and died shortly after his return home.

Of course, the S.M.G. nuns did their best to entertain the pilgrims, and Father Dignam wrote:

"The news is all delightful, the people from here write in raptures, and I believe and hope it is all full of solid good for souls and for the Institute too; and after all, they are the same thing.

. . . . . .

"Our pilgrims are back, deeply impressed with your hospitality, and certainly with an immense increase of faith and devotion and joy. I was quite delighted with them."

Father Dignam was aided in his work by the devoted Secretary of the Apostleship and others. He wrote once: "The Office goes on beautifully; not a hitch. I am indeed blessed."

At the time of the canonization of St. Peter Claver, St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, and St. John

[1] *Messenger*, vol. v. p. 135. [2] Mr. Peter Middlehurst.

Berchmans, life-size pictures of these Saints were painted in Rome and sent to St. Helens. He writes:

"Father Cardwell is delighted with the pictures, especially with St. Alphonsus. I like them all except St. John Berchmans, which I confess I find very ungraceful, and I thought in Rome (from my dear picture[1] of St. Ignatius trampling on Lucifer) that they had overcome the difficulty of the Jesuit habit for a work of art.

"I am most anxious to hear of this wonderful opening in Southwark; it is truly admirable 'Going in haste, indeed.' God bless you, my most dear child.

"Thanks for Cardinal Parocchi's picture, which is very nice. Very busy with my '*Conversations.*'"[2]

The opening in Southwark referred to a house at Streatham offered to the Sisters, which they were obliged to decide about and take possession of in a very hurried way. By means of this foundation, a new mission was opened in the diocese, and Mass was said there for the first time for three centuries, in the nuns' chapel, which continued to serve as the church of the mission for five years until the present beautiful church was erected by the generosity of a benefactor.

The following letter alludes to the incident of a number of poor people, chiefly men, who are fed daily at the S.M.G. Convent in Rome, assembling one Christmas Day in the church to hear a sermon from Padre Maresca:

[1] See *Frontispiece*. [2] *Conversations on the Apostleship*.

"Indeed, I wish you and all your children the best of gifts of the Sacred Heart for the year just beginning; I don't know what more touching sign of His affection there could have been than all those men at Christmas. N—— has written to me some letters of *the sort I like*, so I hope she is maturing in the right way, for, of course, every step she makes in solid virtue is a grace both for you and for the whole Institute—so it is to be hoped our Lady will make her into something at last. My old back has been playing me bad tricks lately and interfered sadly with my writing; but, perhaps, the Lord sees it is the less mischief done, so I am content. God guard and bless you, my dear child, and make you strong both in body and soul."

(To the Same.)

"It is a great comfort to me to see the way in which you refer to your confessor; so long as you find help *there*, not even all the heavy distractions and responsibility which you have to fight with will be able to draw you away from prayer—prayer which is simply *everything*. I had a long letter from Mother A. A., and was altogether gratified with the simple, solid way in which she wrote. It was a great pleasure to me.

"I have very few relics for the sanctuary; one of the Holy Cross, two of the Saints of the Society, one each of St. Paul, SS. Francis de Sales and Chantal, and Blessed Margaret Mary. Tell me if you think it will be in your power to get me some. All that I want in the relics is that they be the saints of

personal love of Jesus Christ (and I suppose if we only knew them, there would not be one who was not), but in small reliquaries, which can hang in a large one. With my whole heart, my dear child, I wish you every best blessing of the Sacred Heart's love for you and for all."

The relics he wished for were soon procured and forwarded.

In 1889 Father Dignam lost his eldest brother, who died after a long and painful illness. The Father wrote to his sister of his joy at the "happy, edifying death. God has indeed been good to us. His last moments were as full of calm and sweetness for others as he had been so invariably during his long, long trial; and I believe God loves him, humble and patient as he so truly was, most dearly."

The *Messenger* was the means of setting on foot a most valuable and important undertaking, called the "Work for Sailors."

A correspondence in its pages brought to light the fact that while Protestant sailors are well supplied with tracts and religious magazines and books, our poor Catholic men had nothing of the kind. Father Dignam took up this work with ardour.

An association was formed, with secretaries to manage it, and a certain number of Catholics sent parcels of books, newspapers, magazines, etc., to them or to the *Messenger* Office, while others "adopted" a ship, and sent such parcels direct to her. To further explain the method, we give a specimen of a parcel sent monthly to a ship on

the China station: Four copies of the *Catholic Times*, four copies of *Catholic Fireside*, *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, *Faith of our Fathers*, *Rosary Magazine* and *Ransomer*, and various leaflets of the Catholic Truth Society.

At Christmas such a parcel contains Christmas cards also.

When we reflect upon the wearisome hours that must so often be passed at sea, or in ships lying off foreign stations, the excellence of this work is easily understood. The gratitude of the men has been expressed in the most touching manner.

As the wants of Catholic sailors came more clearly before Father Dignam's eyes, he saw that they needed a prayer-book of their own, and shortly one was compiled by the C.T.S., small, simple, clear and cheap, which was published in 1892, and has proved to be of the greatest use. This Work for Sailors is thoroughly rooted amongst us, and has been taken up in the United States, and also in France; for, wonderful to relate, France, generally the pioneer of all good works, has been behindhand in this.

Thus Father Dignam's initiative has been the means of consoling and preserving probably the faith of a countless number of souls, who, indeed, well deserved such aid.

The Father's large heart was interested in many works of charity, and very especially so in St. Mary's Home, Eastleigh, a Refuge for the most desolate and forsaken of *all* our abandoned children, for whom his spirit of compassion was very strong.

In 1890 the S.M.G. nuns were invited by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris to make a foundation in his diocese. Father Dignam's advice was asked, as usual, and he wrote:

"I can easily enough understand the Archbishop, for there is room in Paris and work for *ten* houses. God bless you tenfold."

The work undertaken in Paris was placed under the special patronage of Venerable Claude de la Colombière, and the Father wrote:

"I hope V. F. Claude will draw a particular blessing on your gift to him, and make the house in Paris a very hearthstone of the Sacred Heart."

In this same year he writes:

"I am fairly done up, but one hundred and fifty thousand children are consecrating themselves to the Sacred Heart, and I hear wonderful stories of their fervour."

It was not wonderful that amidst all these labours Father Dignam's health should break down.

In August, 1890, a severe fainting fit, followed by an attack of dysentery, alarmed his friends greatly. He was sent to East Lulworth to recruit. He writes thence to his sister: "It is wonderful the amount of undeserved kindness one meets with, and I feel rather as if I were buried under heaps, and piles and mountains of it fathoms deep. I am here, probably, in as sequestered a place as there is left in England; very delightful to me.

"The park wall is on the opposite side of the road, but I have not yet been inside, as I have a little chapel here in the house, where I can say

Mass without exertion. The Father is a dear old friend of more than thirty years, who knows my ways, or rather, my want of them, and is father and mother in one.[1] At present he is engaged in gathering up my luggage, which has distributed itself impartially between Liverpool, Euston and Weymouth—but as he says, it comforts him, since though I may be ill, *I am not much altered.* I am trying to make out what he means by that." But his sister's anxiety about him was very great, and she was naturally most anxious that he should be sent to Bruges, there to be nursed up again, as he had been twenty years before.

She was suffering herself also, and he writes tenderly to her:

"On the top of my illness my coming here is a disappointment to you. I know, I know, child, but now as far as the first goes, let all anxiety be gone, for though I dare say I shall not be good for much for some time yet, I am doing nothing now but gather strength, however slowly, and all that food, and rest, and pure air, and beautiful scenery and pleasant company can do is being done, so you must not fret and fall ill. I shall be very anxious to have good news of you."

He did not rally quickly, and there was a touch of depression in a letter to his sister from London, where he was kept by the dentist, dated October 4th.

"I wish I could say my prayers better, and I am quite perplexed whether the incapacity comes from anything the matter with me, or from a rooted habit

[1] Father Walter Bridge, S.J.

of idleness which has enslaved me. I hope work is not over. However, presently I hope to be able to be a little more lively and well-behaved, for I am not likely to do either you or myself any good by writing in this strain; it will at least make you take care to pray for my conversion."

Three weeks afterwards he writes from St. Helens:

"I am happy to tell you at last that I am quite well again, even according to the doctor's own account. It is wonderful that home seems to have done more for me than all the weeks of wandering and doing nothing. How good is our good God."

In 1891, Father Dignam shared in the great sorrow which fell upon the Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Helens, their Superior, Sister Marie Anne Kohl, after years of intense suffering, giving up her beautiful soul to God, on the feast of St. Helen, August the 18th.

Father Dignam wrote to the community: "There is, I think, a unity, solidity, and above all, a truth about your very unadorned little paper which makes it precious in my eyes. No nun that I ever knew was so purely the creature of her Institute, and no one, who knew her and it, will ever doubt that her life was its panegyric.

"The twelve or more years during which I enjoyed her confidence, convinced me that each moment was for her a separate act of pure and perfect service of God, and the time of death (which all through life she feared so much, but which, when it came, was so peaceful), was but the fitting crown of a life in which self had no place.

"St. John Berchmans will have welcomed her to Heaven, and carried her soul in triumph to the feet of Jesus and Mary for her rest well won. If there was any excess about her (and I do not think there was), it was her love for her community, and when I talk of her resting, I expect it will be only in the comparative degree while one of you is still ungathered."

Of this community Father Dignam once wrote: "I have seen (as Père Petit once said of a community) that my Jesus is well loved there."

After the death of his Eminence, Cardinal Manning, in January, 1892, Father Dignam wrote to the Mother General of the S.M.G. nuns:

"I know the Cardinal's death will be an exceeding affliction to you, and you have lost a great and true friend before all his work was done.

"The circumstances of his death are very touching and beautiful—true to himself and showing that he had lived long in death's presence."

In 1891 his brother, Sylvester, came back from India for a holiday, and went to see his sister at Bruges, but this time Father Dignam was unable to accompany him, and he writes to his sister in his usual spirit of detachment: "When the visit happens, mind and put a great broad seal upon your mouth whenever you are tempted to talk about me. God will give you all sorts of wisdom on other subjects if you are honest in mortifying yourself about this."

In 1892 Father Dignam had the great joy of hearing that the Rules and Constitutions of the

Poor Servants of the Mother of God had been returned with the approbation of the Church upon them.[1]

The alterations made had been few and insignificant; there was, however, one of some importance, which gave Father Dignam, as well as the whole Institute, much joy.

The Constitutions had been founded on those of St. Ignatius, and Father Dignam had in cautious words alluded to St. Ignatius as the Patriarch of the Institute.

When Father Cardella, S.J., read the book he said, "That will never pass; they will take out the name of St. Ignatius." The paragraph was slightly altered, but only to strengthen its force. It now runs as follows: "They ought to regard St. Ignatius of Loyola, from whom specially they derive their spirit, as if he was their Father; they will invoke him and ask from him that the perfection of love for Jesus Christ may be given to them, and that they may become docile children, and devoted to the Congregation."

The arrival of the approbation gave all the more joy because it had been delayed by the unexpected death of Father Cardella, who was the advocate or Promoter of the Cause. When he was taken away, Father Dignam wrote:

"Father Cardella's death will, of course, prove to be a heavy cross to you, but you have had experience enough of God's ways to have learnt

[1] The Rules and Constitutions of the Institute were finally confirmed in 1900.

that all things work together for good, and you will be sure that, if the delay is vexatious, it will prove at last to have been a blessing." Father Cardella was a very distinguished Jesuit and greatly revered in Rome, where he had spent nearly all his life. He had lived a few years in England and knew English perfectly.

He gave the S.M.G. nuns in Rome their retreat during Holy Week, 1890. On Good Friday the Three Hours' Devotion was preached in their church to the public. Father Cardella said he wished to assist, and, going into a corner of a tribune, he remained on his knees immovable the whole time. Afterwards he expressed his delight with the discourses which were given by Father Peter Paul Mackey, O.P. He was in excellent health up to Christmas, and the matter concerning the S.M.G. Constitutions was nearly finished when on St. Stephen's day he, while saying the Litanies with his community, was stricken with paralysis. The stroke affected his limbs but not his head, and during the following week there was a constant stream to his sick-room of Cardinals, Bishops, and men of all ranks in society, many of them shedding tears as they knelt beside his bed to make their last confession to him or receive his dying blessing, for he was greatly esteemed and revered as a spiritual director. He died, January 5th, 1891.

After some delay, his place was supplied to the Sisters by Father de Augustinis, S.J., Rector of the Gregorian University, who became Promoter of the Cause, and, by his devoted labour, brought it to

a happy conclusion. Great happiness was also given when shortly afterwards the Holy Father deigned to bestow upon the Institute Cardinal Mazzella, S.J., as their Cardinal Protector.

In September, 1892, Father Dignam celebrated the silver jubilee of his priesthood. In the previous March he wrote: "The thought of September makes me blush, and my heart beats at the thought if ere that time tepidity may be cast away," and he adds: "The way you pray for me and thank God for His mercy to me is to me a source of immense happiness and courage. Some such concentrated pity is really needed to draw me from the abyss of my unhappy nature, and the Sacred Heart cannot, will not, permit that even I should altogether frustrate so sweet a charity."

Father Dignam's trust in the prayers of others reminds us of that of Père Olivaint, of holy memory, who says, so beautifully, "I hide myself amidst the prayers of those who love me."

To one who prayed much for him, he wrote: "I like your '*Veni Creator*' *well reflected* upon, for you must well realize that the things that can do me good are what can get graces also to penetrate a hard heart! Alas! how true it is! What then I should most desire is an act of contrition and a *Sume* and an *Ave Maria*. I think if our Lord had these every day, He would have pity on me; and ask Him to make me true.

. . . . . .

"You ask what you are to do for me in the precious days that are coming.[1] Ah, my child,

[1] His retreat.

I can only say, pray as for one whom only great mercies can reach. Ask for the will that does not hesitate, true light, real sincerity, sorrow great even as my sins; unchanging hope. I live on my dear prayers, and I am sure that they will save even me at last from the one only great, horrible misery, that of offending God."

Those who loved the Father felt that no offering would be so acceptable to him as Masses said for his intention. One hundred and fifty Masses were offered for him by a small band of his devoted children and friends. These were divided amongst St. Peter's, the Tomb of St. Ignatius, the Room of the Saint at Loyola, Paray-le-Monial, Lourdes, and the Sanctuary at St. Helens. With this offering £25 was given to the sanctuary, and an address which ran as follows:

"DEAR REV. FATHER, we, your loving children, in offering our heartfelt congratulations on this holy and happy day, welcome at the same time a much desired opportunity of testifying to you our warm affection and deep gratitude.

"Not one of us can fail to thank God to-day for that consecration to His priesthood which, through the course of twenty-five years, has brought glory to Him and comfort to so many souls. Above all, dear Rev. Father, we thank our Lord for all you have done to make His Sacred Heart better known and better loved, and to make us your children, in our humble way, better disciples of His love.

"Realizing, as we do, what an Infinite Treasure

we have in His loving Heart, to Him we owe the debt of gratitude we owe you, praying that He Himself will repay you in His own good and overflowing measure." They then mentioned the Masses we have recorded, saying that they knew so well "they should please him most by giving honour to the adorable Heart," and conclude "that God may grant you health and strength to labour on for His interests in the work so dear to your heart and ours, is the earnest prayer of your devoted children."

This address was beautifully illuminated; and that presented by the Poor Servants of the Mother of God was painted with passion flowers, corn sheaves and grapes, and thus expressed:

"REVEREND AND DEAR FATHER, we, your children, Poor Servants of the Mother of God and the Poor, come to congratulate you to-day. Twenty-five years ago on September 22nd, you were anointed a priest of the Living God. It was a day of great joy to the Sacred Heart—a day of great joy to you—and though we knew it not, a day of great joy for us. Only a few years later God gave you to us for a Father whose like is seldom seen on earth. What do we not owe you? Our formation in the spiritual and religious life—unceasing care and patience in your direction and guidance, many beautiful instructions, and, above all, those fourteen retreats in which you taught us the spirit of St. Ignatius, strengthened us and led us closer to God—the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which you instilled and nourished in our souls till it has become, we trust, our spirit.

"All these are happy and blessed recollections that fill so many of those years which have passed since the glorious day of your priestly consecration.

"And last and greatest of all, we owe to you our dear and holy Constitutions. Your mind conceived them—your hand wrote them. Now they have passed the searching test of the Church's scrutiny, and are given back to us with her seal to be for evermore our law, our guide, our support, so that as long as the Institute shall exist—when we, your poor children of to-day have done our work and are gone—your name, beloved and revered Father, shall live for evermore within our Institute.

"Accept, then, we pray you, our few broken expressions of gratitude which can never be fitly rendered in words. Accept a tiny offering for the dear Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart. We have arranged to have twenty-five Masses said for you—five each at the altar of the Holy Table in St. John Lateran, at the altar above the Holy Stairs, on the spot where St. Ignatius and his Company made their first vows, in the room where St. Ignatius wrote his Constitutions, and gave up his soul to God, and at the Tomb of St. Aloysius; and we, ourselves, will hear five hundred Masses, offer five hundred Communions, say fifteen hundred Rosaries and fifteen hundred prayers.

"Reverend and dear Father, we beg your blessing, and remain your devoted and grateful children in Christ.

"THE POOR SERVANTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD."

Two Sisters from the hospital presented this address. As he read it, the tears flowed down his cheeks, and he said: "I am glad it is only you, my *own children*, who see me thus unmanned." A beautiful illuminated card was sent from Bruges and Haywards Heath, which ran as follows:

"*Suscitabo Mihi Sacerdotem fidelem qui juxta Cor meum Faciet.*"—(*Reg.* i. 2.)

Reverendus Augustus Dignam, S.J.

Ordinatus Die 22 Septembris, 1867.

"O Quam Magnum est Officium Sacerdotum, quibus datum est Dominum Maiestatis verbis sacris Consecrare, labiis benedicere, manibus tenere, ore proprio sumere, et cæteris ministrare."—(*Imit.* iv. 11.)

Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus,
22 Septembris, 1892.

Plurimum venerando Patri prosint in quantum juxta doctrinam de Communione Sanctorum prodesse possunt preces quas 1388 dierum spatio ferventer juderunt, ac opera quæ simul alacriter præstiterunt. Can. Reg. Lat. Mon. Nazareth ac Prior. B. M. V. Boni Consilii.[1]

Elegit te Deus et Præ Elegit te.
Tu es Sacerdos in Æternum."

[1] "May the prayers which for the space of 1,388 days they fervently poured forth for the venerated Father, and the works which at the same time they performed with alacrity, be exceedingly serviceable inasmuch as they can be according to the doctrine of the Communion of Saints."

The Sisters of Notre Dame were, of course, not behindhand with their tokens of affection and esteem. He writes to them that he had waited to thank *them* at his leisure: "One discovery I have made that jubilees are things so trying that one in a lifetime is quite enough. But when your sweet little card is there quietly in my hand, it seems to me like a picture of the kindness of God, and I say how I wish I could have done something to have deserved it. But then it would be less like the kindness of God, who is kind to the undeserving. How many Masses, how many Communions, how many prayers! and those 6,287 acts of virtue which have each and every one given glory to the Sacred Heart before they could come to me. I do not think you want me to thank you; I think you know as well as I feel, that I simply cannot do it. I can thank God who has given you such loving hearts, and beg Him to fill them more and more with His good things. I think our late dear Sister Superior is not at all absent from us in this, in which her charity would have taken such great delight, and I ask her to get from our Lady the grace that not one of the community she lived and died for may cease, while life lasts, to grow more and more perfect in their vocation."

A number of other communities sent him letters and offerings, but his answers were not all preserved.

To another nun he writes: "I quite understood your sympathy with my jubilee joy. God's kindness seemed, as it were, revealed to me."

To another Religious: "I want to thank you for all you have done for me, and to tell you with what joy and gratitude I have felt how God, our dear God, has inflamed devoted hearts with compassion and charity for me. I think and I hope it has put a new stamina into my soul, and I mean to be braver and better."

(To his Sister.)

"It is remarkable that the feeling you tell me I had at my ordination, that at last I should be able to pay you back, has been very present to me of late.

"What I have felt most keenly have been the prayers and gratitude of *communities*, but altogether it has been with a sense of being *overwhelmed* with goodness, and that the goodness was all God, and taught me more of Him than I had ever learnt before. The great number of Masses can, of course, never be forgotten, and I take them wonderingly, and think that, like everything else, they come from Him and go to Him. May they only be to Him a glorious reparation for so much wretchedness, and the beginning of better things."

The English nuns at Bruges had brought out a prayer-book, and before publishing another edition they asked the Father's opinion and criticism.

He wrote: "The book is a wonderful collection of precious thoughts and prayers, which must be a treasure to multitudes, and the printing and mounting of the book does the highest credit to Desclée. No; far from finding the prayers of St. Augustine too

long, I think it an oasis of sustained thought amidst such a crowd of detached ones."

It is, indeed, a valuable prayer-book, and in one part of it, entitled "Helpful Thoughts," there are many short sayings of Father Dignam's, as well as those of Father Morris, S.J.[1]

It was extraordinary to see the quantity of reading that Father Dignam could get through in conjunction with all his other work. He seems to have been well-acquainted with a great number of interesting works in both English and French.

He writes to a friend: "I have been privileged this year in regard to books, having received Clair's *Life of St. Ignatius*, Didon's *Jésus Christ*, and the great *Vie de S. Hugues*, and very splendid copies."

He was a great admirer of the works of Father Bridgett, C.SS.R., and speaks of him as "a giant in other matters besides history." He also speaks with great admiration of the *Life of St. Anselm*, by Martin Rule, and says: "He has made of it such a gem that it is a pure joy to read."

He was a great admirer of Louis Veuillot; and when a friend objected to the intemperate language so often used by this distinguished writer, the Father replied: "Oh, yes; I know he often goes too far; but then, he is so *true*—so *perfectly* TRUE—and he makes those Freemasons tremble before him."

Father Dignam was spiritual director to various men of all classes in life, who held him in great veneration. Several of these, had they survived him,

[1] *Flowers of Nazareth.* Our Lady's Priory, Haywards Heath, Sussex.

would have testified to his virtues. Many priests sought him as a confessor, coming even from a distance to find him.

One of Father Dignam's spiritual children writes: "I cannot quite remember the exact time, but I think it could not have been later than 1890 that I perceived a great change in Father Dignam. He was becoming more supernatural; it seemed to be the change when one who has been very good, very interior, has attained a higher phase of sanctity, has become, as we say, a Saint. I spoke of this to others, and they told me they had the same impression.

"His severity seemed to disappear, and to be wholly absorbed into his love of the Sacred Heart, so that he could only breathe compassion, love and tenderness. Writing about a person who had given him immense labour and trouble, and shown him ingratitude, and who had worn out the patience of others, he says: 'I would only ask of you not to say to the child that you have no hope. I could never dare to say such a thing, for it seems to me so contrary to Him who neither crushed the bruised reed nor quenched the smouldering flax. But I ask it of you for His sake.'"

Another penitent writes: "Our faithful Father kept himself in the background all through those years at St. Helens, where one felt his own silent sanctification was going on. I used to *feel* the ripening and mellowing, and the rounding of the corners every time I saw him."

Writing to one who suffered much from weari-

ness at meditation, he says: "It is a wholesome humiliation to gape, as you so well say, at the subject of your meditation. Spend the time in gaping, sitting mute and cheerful at our Lord's feet as a very contented dog might at his master's."

To another:

"If there is no disgust and no irritation, there will be very true humility, and He will be honoured, though you are not flattered."

He writes to another: "Take courage about yourself. Our Lord will reproach you most of all if you do not make Him great acts of hope.

"You do not know how glad He is to *forgive* and to *give* when you once remember what *He is*, and believe in His everlasting love."

(To a community whose Superior was dying.)

"I am very, very grieved to hear the news. I don't think it will be very hard for her to give her soul up to our Lord, for she has loved and served Him very heartily—but there is always bitter pain in separation, and for you all the blow must necessarily be a dreadful one. Tell her I will say Mass for her, and especially ask that an abounding hope may be given to her that the infinite charity of the Sacred Heart may perfectly purify her soul.

"Mind now and look at God with courage and do not doubt that all graces and strength will be granted to you. Give her my best and tenderest blessing."

(To a Spiritual Child.)

"You may be *very* sure that if God gave me an occasion I should not fail to see you—but as you see, for some good reason, He does not seem to wish it—His Holy Will be done. I am, however, delighted to hear you have had profitable talk with Father Morris.

"By all means get him to talk to you of our Lord as a Mediator, and especially of Blessed Margaret Mary's word, *comme un nouveau Médiateur*, which is really the most important word He ever said to her, theologically considered."

(To a Lady.)

"My dear Child in J.C.,—You ask for a *tessera*. What you would love best, I think, is St. Teresa's superb Spanish: *Solo Dios Basta*. With its double signification, it is the compression of the whole of the high thoughts of the sons of God: *God is enough;* I despise what is not God; unless it lead to Him, it is nothing; if it lure from Him, I hate it. And again: *God is enough;* His Immensity, Wisdom, Sweetness, Beauty, all mine. My heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God.

"Our Promoters love their *tessera* dearly—*Cor Jesu ubique ametur!*

"My own taste finds exquisite beauty in the first words of Jeremias: 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord God!'[1] To me it says: Unless you are as a little child, you are nothing—and then breathes out a whole

[1] Jeremias i. 6.

passion of humility and reliance on God—of alacrity and courage.

"I remember the Curé d'Ars once gave to a dear child of mine the penance to say to our Lord, on each one of her beads, the words of St. John of the Cross: '*To suffer and be despised for Thee.*' She said it shivering, but it has made her life ever since.

"Your two great needs at present point rather to a prayer, perhaps, than to a conviction. *Fac ut portem* might be your strength. But very wisely you sigh after a little more habitual union with God. Engrave on your ring: *Make Thou my soul in Thee to live.* Beg God to give you zeal—and a lively sense of the helps poor sinners get from the offerings of your pain, and your service, and your love. God bless you."

(To a Religious.)

"My dear Child,—I know very well the dreary feeling of this congestion of the mind after much perplexity, and the sense of incapacity to either judge or act. Something of that was, however, inevitable, and I am by no means disappointed. I only wish it were in your power at this time to experience the peace, the contentment and the strength that come together with a hearty acceptance of the incapacity:—1. To *feel* I can do nothing, and to be glad to feel it; 2. To remember that were it not by God's gratuitous gift, I should never be otherwise. Try to say to Him: By Thy Mercy, dear Lord, I am content to be incapable, and rejoice to be nothing. Teach me that this is what

of myself I am always. If ever I can think or pray, or hope or love and labour—all this is from Thee; *mine* the faults and defects in all I do. Oh, may I know myself and despise myself in the truth of my heart, tranquilly and with contentment, without surprise or bitterness at finding myself despicable. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*—'under the shadow of His wings thou shalt rest!' —God's tenderest blessings on you, my child."

The following letter is addressed to the Rev. Mother of the Visitation Convent at Westbury, and refers to a French leaflet forwarded to Father Dignam of the promises of our Blessed Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary, which the nuns of the Visitation consider more accurately worded than the one generally used in England, but the difference is really slight.

Father Dignam's *spirit* is well shown in his answer:

"Holy Cross, July 8th, 1890.

"DEAR REV. MOTHER,—I owe you great thanks for Sister Jane Margaret's kind letter and the leaflet. That conscientious presentation of the text itself of our Blessed Sister will inevitably do a work of inestimable value—value, as I venture to believe, much greater than is or can be yet realized by those who are God's chosen instruments to the end. I do not wish to conceal from you my most sincere and most intense conviction in this matter, the more so as my own peculiar situation commits me to a propagation of the more popular form adopted by Father Ramière, not without the most solid and

mature consideration. A certain reticence which this entails is the only element in the matter which I regret, and which I shall certainly strive to supersede.

"Meantime my audience is so very, very largely composed of the poor and ignorant that it does not matter so much.

"Father Mackey was good enough to write to me before his beautiful little book[1] was published, and I am happy to say I have it. With thanks to Sister Jane Margaret, believe me, dear Rev. Mother,

"Cordially and devotedly in J.C.,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

[1] *Month of the Sacred Heart*, by Blessed Margaret Mary. Translated, with Preface, by Father Benedict Mackey, O.S.B., to whom we owe the beautiful new edition of the works of St. Francis of Sales, &c.

CHAPTER IX.

CLOSING DAYS. THE END.

"And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity. . . . Because his soul hath laboured, he shall see and be filled."

On January 2, 1893, Father Dignam wrote to his sister: "All blessings, my dear, on your new year, for new years are growing scarce." Alas! he was only destined to see one more.

He continues: "No, I did not get Mass at midnight, but by taking things very quietly I was able to say all three in the morning, as I was able to be quiet afterwards. Christmas has been to me a time of great blessing, and my health is wonderful. I make myself happy at the thought of your growing old and wise. The volcano burning low, and your interest in transitory things growing less and less and less strong. I have only this moment got notice by telegram of another of my best and most precious friends going off to Heaven last night, a 'hidden treasure,' of whom probably enough you have never heard, but a very serious loss to me—Father Kingdon.

"I was rather sorry to miss seeing Father General, but it was impossible. He seems to have impressed everybody with his goodness, and has

written a very sweet letter of thanks for his reception."

The Very Reverend Father General, who had been elected at Loyola in December, 1892, paid a brief visit to England and Ireland at Christmas.

He goes on to tell her of his amusement at a review of the Sailors' Prayer-Book in a Calcutta paper, which states, he says: "That it is compiled by my relatives, and the praises thereof are appropriately headed 'Stray Notes,'" and he adds, "In the French *Messenger* I am represented as stating that the sailors are very fond of my *Messenger*. The statement being in truth that they look forward to their packet of newspapers."

On January 3rd, Father Dignam wrote to the Mother General, S.M.G.: "What you say is true, the rapidity with which England is turning pagan is a solemn thing to look on at.

"It is not in the infidel books that one sees it, but the unconscious change in the Christmas stories and the speeches men make which are not meant to be irreligious at all.

"We are very, very much in want of good prayers, and for the present, at least, I would rather have a saint who prayed than a saint who preached. God bless you, my dear child, what I say will tell you whether or not I appreciate your children's beautiful gift—a store of prayers which might give courage even to the most cowardly. What a blessing that God has taken us out of the world. My child, may the Heart of Jesus come and take possession of you!"

In February Father Dignam went to Dalkeith to make his retreat, which he began on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, and little did those who were praying for him think that it was to be the last retreat he would ever make. The shadow of death hung over it. On the 16th one of those foreign telegrams, so cruel in their brevity, was sent to him, bringing the news of his brother's death in Calcutta. He wrote to his sister: "God has been pleased to come suddenly, though it may not have been so sudden as the message seems; in any case we know he was not unprepared, but it has been a very sensible shock to me. . . . I, of course, am only in the second day of my retreat.

"It should be a great comfort to you, and a matter of the most lively gratitude to us all, that the Sacred Heart's kind providence inspired you to write so efficaciously at the seasonable time, and so made you the means of securing his blessed eternity.

"This thought is an overwhelming one to me. God's tenderness, indeed, is infinite. May He give you fortitude and comfort now, my dearest!"

His brother, Sylvester, was exceedingly dear to Father Dignam. They had never been separated until the younger brother entered the Society, and though he had been disappointed in his hope that his brother would follow him into Religion, they had always been knit together in bonds of closest brotherly love. Sylvester lived in Calcutta (where he was held in the highest esteem as a very successful solicitor and an excellent Catholic), but he paid frequent visits to England to see his family.

The only anxiety that he caused his brother had been his abstention from the sacraments, which he approached very seldom from a mistaken idea on this point. His cloistered sister had during 1892 made a strong effort to overcome his timidity, and had sent him a work by Mgr. de Segur.

On reading the letter which he wrote to her in acknowledgment, Father Dignam says: "His simplicity and sincerity are great; if by God's mercy Mgr. de Segur's ardour touches him, and he is drawn to frequent confession, he will have a sunny end of life yet. But that is one of the rarest of changes."

But this rare change *was* wrought. He became a frequent communicant, and the Jesuit Father who attended him in sickness wrote: "His life for the last few months had not been merely good, but holy. The day I gave him the last sacraments, he said: 'Ah, I don't feel able to make my spiritual communions driving into office, and again coming back in the evening, as well as I used.' I feel his death very, very much; we had become close friends." In a previous letter this same Father had written:

"For many months past he has been most faithful and fervent in approaching the sacraments, and I need hardly say that his charity to the poor has been very great and constant.

"I said Mass for him to-day (Ash Wednesday), and all, Archbishop, Fathers, and nuns, are praying earnestly for his recovery—for his loss would be a severe blow to the Church and to the Society here.

"His integrity and ability have been of very

great service to the college here and to the Archdiocese at large."

The *Calcutta Statesman* says: "As a mark of respect, and to enable those connected with the High Court to attend the deceased's funeral, all the judges closed their courts at four o'clock. Mr. Justice Trevelyan, on taking his seat on the bench yesterday morning, referring to the event, said that he regretted to hear of the death of Mr. Dignam, one of the oldest attorneys of the High Court, and he hoped that the young attorneys would try and emulate the deceased gentleman in all his good qualities."

Mr. Sylvester Dignam was never married; his charity was boundless, both to the Church and to the poor.

One of the S.M.G. nuns in Rome, not knowing the Father was in retreat, wrote to him about a trial which she was feeling keenly. He made an exception in her favour and replied:

"But you must see, my child, that *God* has done this, and done it *for your sake*. As for your present feelings, let all eyes and all hearts be lifted up with very true contempt for mere earthly estimation of honour or reputation, which our Lord would have you trample under foot with fullest and deepest sincerity. I want you all to pray for my brother, whose sudden death I hear of from Father Naish, the Rector, who was his confessor. Thank God he had been preparing for some months. God bless you."

The months passed on, and though those who

watched Father Dignam closely saw he was very feeble, he plodded away at his work in his usual cheerful, uncomplaining manner, so that little heed was taken of it.

(To the Mother General S.M.G.)

"Your little notes reached me, and I feel I am very bad not to answer them, but feelings are things too costly to be indulged in. We shall be seeing A. and you soon, and then, as you say, the budget!"

He was asked about this time to choose a text of Scripture to be painted under the picture of the Pleading Heart in the Church of the S.M.G. Sisters in Rome. He replied:

"Either:

'I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given me, because they are Thine.'

"Or:

'Can a woman forget her infant? Yet will not I forget thee.'

"God's best blessing on you all out of His Heart."

In July he went to give a retreat to the Benedictine monks at Ampleforth, and this was destined to be the last retreat he ever gave.

The Prior, writing of it, says: "He was evidently breaking up; he could hardly form a sentence; so different from the bright, sparkling man of previous years." Another Benedictine Father remarked: "There was something pathetic and edifying to see a Religious struggling in the name of obedience to give his failing strength for the benefit of others."

The Father must have been unconscious of his failing powers. Writing on July the 31st, he says: "My few days with the monks have done me good. God's blessing and St. Ignatius' be yours, dear child."

Father Dignam had a high esteem for the English Benedictine Fathers.

About the middle of August the Father had a long fainting fit after Mass, but he did not give up even then, and was in his confessional the same evening, and went about doing his work as usual for several days following, and wrote, on the 19th, to the Mother General, entering with his usual interest into community affairs, and remarks: "My heart has apparently been making another strike against work, and so I fainted, but with the exception of a certain sense of weakness, I am much as usual now. I shall soon be better."

He then went to Manchester, and writes to his sister from thence, on August the 24th, one of his bright, cheerful letters, making a joke of her great anxiety. She thought he wanted a constant attendant; he replies:

"You are teasing yourself a great deal more than is necessary because the inefficiency of my pumping vigour is part of myself. We have not come to such dismal extremities as to need to improvise a *valet de chambre*, in the alarming way you speak of, for happily I can still put my own stockings on! I am having everything that can do me good, and I hope you won't think things worse than they are.

"What I principally require, I think, is brains! Great thanks to all for the good, good prayers which are better than anything."

From Manchester he went to Yarmouth, and the S.M.G. nuns having sent him a relic of Ven. Claude, he writes to the Mother General: "Tell A. A. I have got her relic, and if it is worth while, Father de la Colombière will cure me, but I think his heart is in greater things."

From Yarmouth he went on to London, where some very important business awaited him, and he wrote from thence on September the 12th: "Yesterday we concluded an arrangement for the transfer of the Apostleship to *Wimbledon*. My health is better."

The move to Wimbledon had been long in contemplation, and though Father Dignam loved St. Helens, and would not have quitted it of his own choice, he felt that it was better for the Apostleship that its centre should be in or near London, and the new College and Church of the Sacred Heart at Wimbledon would be a most suitable dwelling place.

Father Dignam returned to St. Helens on September the 20th, only to wind up his business. It was a most painful time, filled with farewells, and he knew that his departure would prove a veritable heart-break to many, and for them he suffered.

A suggestion having been made to him about the Promoters' meeting, he replied: "I am, indeed, most anxious to put life into it, and whatever will

do *that* is what I wish for." On Sunday, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, he preached for the last time in St. Helens. His voice was weak, and he looked very ill, but it was remarked that he "put his heart into it," and he preached on the Apostleship, striving for the last time in that church, where his voice had been so often heard, to plead for the Pleading Heart of Jesus. He said his last Mass in the chapel on the 27th; it was filled, and there was not a dry eye among those present; all felt that they would never all meet in that spot again, and no one could help thinking of the last meeting with the Master and those He loved "even to the end."

The Mass was that of SS. Cosmas and Damian, and the words of Holy Church were singularly appropriate: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart and the humble of spirit shall be saved," said the Gradual. "Blessed are the poor," said the Gospel. "Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh."

Two hours after his Mass he left St. Helens for ever. It was the last Wednesday in September, and on the last Wednesday in the following September he left earth for ever.

On October the 5th he came to the Convent of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God at Roehampton, where he had not been for many years, and where since his last visit a chapel had been built and various additions had been made to the convent. He seemed better and in good spirits, and spoke with great delight of Wimbledon and its "charming community." He went all over th

convent, and was greatly pleased with the chapel and with the large band of novices and postulants. He sat amongst them for a few minutes, and told some stories of the early days of the Institute, ending with a few of those grave, sweet words of his that made an impression on all hearts. To save him fatigue, the orphans had been kept at a distance, but he insisted on speaking to them.

Ten days afterwards he came again to take leave of the Mother General, who was going to Rome, and again he seemed better in health and spirits; and when at parting the uncertainty of life was alluded to, and the thought that they might never meet again, on account of *her* delicate health, he said: "Well, I am contented, for God is building you up."

It was the 17th of October, feast of Blessed Margaret Mary.

Five days later a heavy blow fell upon the Society in the death of Father Morris, at Wimbledon. Father Dignam's first thought was for the community at Bruges, where Father Morris was greatly loved, esteemed, and trusted. He wrote:

"We have to bear a terribly sudden and irreparable calamity in the death of Father Morris.

"He had preached in the church vigorously; at the close he repeated the words of his text: *Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;* then came the first signs of coming distress, but he drew a long breath, and added — and *to God the things that are God's*, and fell. He never recovered speech or consciousness, and so worthily died the worthiest

priest I ever knew, the regret for whom will be spread as wide as the land; with whom I was only just beginning to cherish an intimacy, and whose every movement was edification. R.I.P.

. . . . . .

"After a few days' fluctuation in which there was something to suffer, I have quite regained health, and everything is as kind and pleasant as can be, the community nothing but kindness, and the Superior, if possible, still more. So I want you to accept a large and comprehensive expression of great and universal contentment and help me to thank God for my good estate."

During the course of November he was so much better that he preached twice in the church at Wimbledon. The subject was Purgatory, and he dwelt on the duty of praying for the Holy Souls, and offering for them our trifling privations, self-denials, troubles and crosses, which were of such great value to them; and he warned his hearers earnestly against the spirit of worldliness. His voice was very feeble, and his sermons lacked the power and vigour of former days. It was singular that both he and Father Morris should preach their last sermon in the same pulpit, within a few weeks of each other.[1] One of the last letters runs as follows:

"Wimbledon, Nov. 16th, 1893.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN J.C.,—I received your beautiful gift. I am quite delighted with it. As

[1] This pulpit is now in possession of the Augustinian Nuns at Haywards Heath, and is valued by them as a relic, and on it is a commemoration brass plate.

they are opening the school chapel at Morton next Sunday, our home chapel will be denuded of its best vestment, so it has just arrived in the time of extreme necessity. I shall be glad to hear better news of your health, for sleeplessness is of all things the most wearing; so pray get a remedy, but a wholesome one. I remember the advice I heard Father Gallwey give (the truest possible): 'Get down low enough and you will pray.' It is what *He* taught David: *A contrite and humble heart Thou wilt not despise.* Always go to Him with all your sins in your hands; He won't send you away. With very sincere gratitude, I am, ever in Jesus Christ,

"A. DIGNAM, S.J."

He heard confessions for a short time on three successive Saturdays, and on November 25th the words of absolution fell for the last time from his lips, and thus he concluded his faithful and difficult ministry of twenty-six years as a confessor.

On Sunday, November the 26th, while sitting at dinner in the refectory, a slight stroke of paralysis fell upon Father Dignam. It principally affected his articulation, and caused great weakness. He rallied in a few days, and was able to go out, and his first visit was to the *Messenger* Office, and he was able to receive visitors, but the weakness in his hands was so great that he was unable to say Mass. A multitude of prayers went up that this trial might pass away; a novena of Masses was said for him at the Altar of Our Lady of Consolation in the Church of St. Augustine, in Rome. This ended on Christ-

mas eve, and on Christmas Day the Father was able to offer the Holy Sacrifice, and continued to do so daily.

When asked whether prayers should be asked for him in the *Messenger*, he would not hear of it, saying: "In this work we have to sink self, and to be effaced."

The deprivation of saying Mass was to him a keen suffering; his awe and devotion in offering the Holy Sacrifice never varied from his first Mass to his last. This extreme reverence added to his natural slowness of movement, and made him a little longer saying Mass than is usual. To hear him say Mass was always a lesson in reverence and love towards our Lord. He was always particular in elevating the chalice to the full height that the rubrics allow. Once, writing about the Mass, he said:

"There is nothing of so much worth as Holy Mass. Jesus Christ is there for you; the priest is your representative. Our Lord desired to be remembered; it was for this He bade His priests to offer up continually the Holy Sacrifice. At Holy Mass Jesus delivers Himself up to you to do with Him as you will.

"*Per Ipsum, et cum Ipso, et in Ipso*—these are the words the priest says. Make them your own: '*by Whom, with Whom, in Whom* you adore and thank, and make atonement and pray.' All things will be given to you together with Him."

As he never omitted Mass, except for a few days in severe illness, we estimate that he said nearly

nine thousand eight hundred Masses, of which not one was either hurried or negligent.

He grew so much better that he went for a short time to Beaumont Lodge, his last visit to a house of the Society being thus to the one which had witnessed the beginnings of his religious life and his holy vows. Later on he suffered from ulceration of the throat and mouth, so that he could take hardly any nourishment, and early in March came a severe fainting fit, after his Mass, which seemed to affect him more than the attack in the previous November.

After a few days he was able to resume saying Mass, but his articulation was slower and thicker, and his general state one of such debility that it was thought wiser to remove him to Manresa House, Roehampton, where he could have more constant care and attention than he could meet with in a college.

He was very sorry to leave Wimbledon, and had so often spoken of his happiness there, saying how good and delightful the community were,[1] adding, each time, "every one of them." One day he said to a friend, laughing, that he was treated at the college with such respect and courtesy, "quite as though I were somebody," and he could not think why it was so.

The Fathers, on their side, were sorry to lose him, and said that he had edified them immensely by his patience and resignation, and especially by his uniform cheerfulness. He was beloved by all.

[1] The late lamented Father R. F. Clarke, S.J., was then Rector there.

When asked by someone if he were sorry to leave Wimbledon, he replied: "I should say yes, if it were not ungrateful to God." But leaving Wimbledon meant far more to him than merely exchanging one house for another.

It meant that his work was at an end, and both Apostleship and *Messenger* were to pass into other hands. The latter had, indeed, been edited by another Father since January, but this was now to be a permanent arrangement, and Father Dignam was to lie by. God's ways are wonderful with His elect. If those who knew Father Dignam well had been asked what he would feel when this should occur, they would have replied that he would willingly lay down the burden and long only to be "dissolved and to be with Christ;" but not so did the Master will. Father Dignam so loved his work that he clung to life and longed to regain his strength. When he left Wimbledon College, he said to his successor almost the same words that Père Ramière had used in 1883: "The Sacred Heart Pleading for us is a great revelation and It has to be made known;" and when he was answered that surely It had now been made known, he replied: "Only to a handful, in comparison to all who might know It and ought to know It, if we could only get them to listen!" He was destined, therefore, to follow in the footsteps of Him who said: "*My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me.*"

Only one year before this time Father Dignam wrote to a penitent who was in great suffering: "Do not let this strong resistance to suffering discourage

you. It is a loving wisdom which permits it, and every least effort to submit will bring your heart great graces. God is very, very patient with you. Nothing (if you can do it) will help you so much as a real thought of some one single point of the pain of Jesus—whether it be the agony of His act of contrition in the Garden—or the first lash of the scourge —an isolated pain borne for me."

He heard of all that was going on in the Church, and the increasing evil in the world, the injuries done to his Master, and with all the fervour of his nature — always ardent, though kept so strictly under control—he longed to break another lance in His defence:

> Ah me! to see the mighty fields a-glow,
> And reap no golden sheaves!
> To see the trees with burdens bending low,
> And pluck but withered leaves.
>
> Oh, for the health to bear the reaper's toil,
> To bring bright harvests in!
> Oh, for the strength to break the barren soil,
> To root the briars of sin!

The seat of Father Dignam's suffering was in his head, which had been more or less the case all through his life. It must not be understood by this that his mind was in the least impaired—his intellect was as clear, his memory as retentive as ever—but his extreme weakness limited the use of his mental powers; he constantly felt what many of us have experienced after a long illness, when we say: "I am too tired to think—too tired to speak;" and when asked a difficult question, his brow would knit with the effort of thinking how to answer.

Father Dignam made his vows, as we know, on the feast of the Crown of Thorns, and certainly those thorns had pressed upon him all through the rest of his life. But not for one moment did he wish it otherwise—not for one moment did he will otherwise than God willed.

Fénelon has said: *Ne pas souffrir dans la volonté c'est ne pas souffrir;* and Father Dignam might truly have said:

> Only be done in me, adorèd Will—
> Only, O crown, for Jesus' sake be worn;

his lower nature suffered, but he ever said his *Fiat.*

A friend once pitied him for being thus put aside. He replied: "A life of obscurity and to be kept in the background is the best life for me."

After his removal to Manresa his health improved, though very gradually, and he took a good deal of exercise in the grounds.

On April 2nd, the Poor Servants of the Mother of God kept the Silver Jubilee of their Institute, and the Father wrote in pencil to the Mother General in Rome: "As much as ever I can, my dearest Mother, I implore Almighty God and His sweet Mother Mary to fill your heart and those of all your children with their tenderest blessings, their choicest graces.—A. D., S.J." And then on a picture of St. Mary Magdalen: "God bless you; you are a comfort, my child."

In April, his sister from Bruges had occasion to come to her convent at Haywards Heath, for about ten days. A petition was made that he might

be sent there to see her—they had not met for seven years.

But the doctor considered that it would be most imprudent, so the Superiors had to refuse. With the permission of the Bishop, his sister could have come to Manresa to see him.

She wrote to her brother to ask whether she might seek this permission. He had not written to her since his attack in November; but now he took a pencil into his trembling hand and wrote: "I do not think it would edify to ask the Bishop's leave to come and see me, and I would sooner make the sacrifice. I beseech you now not to let your heart be occupied about it, but cheerfully do God's holy will. I am improving in both appetite and in strength, and I love you. Be content. God bless you—dear love to your Mother."

This was his last letter to his beloved and faithful sister, and thus closed the correspondence of forty years between them.

A few weeks afterwards a friend asked him why his sister had not been to see him. He replied: "Oh, I would not have it; I should not have thought it *at all right* for her to do such a thing." His visitor continued: "Could you not have gone to see her at Haywards Heath?" "Well," he answered, "*I* did not see any reason against it; but it was thought better not, and so of course that settled it."

Some friends went to see him on May the 8th, his birthday, and found him rather depressed because someone had told him he could not recover. His friends assured him that this was

a mistake, and that he would recover in time. "You know, Father," said one, "you are suffering from over-work and over-fatigue; you need a long, long rest." He replied, "When you say that, you make me feel like a hypocrite, for what have I done?" So they told him that they supposed the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* had been a myth, and that none of the little red Magazines had appeared month by month for nine years, and this made him laugh.

He spoke much of the kindness he was experiencing at Manresa; he had every comfort, every care; all were so good to him. In religious life all may rely on kind care and nursing in the hours of sickness; but the dear Father was specially blessed in this respect.

Not only was he carefully and skilfully nursed, but with a thoughtful tenderness for which those who love him can never be sufficiently grateful.

At the end of May one of his spiritual children having written to consult him upon a point of some importance, he wrote a few lines to her with great difficulty, and said he hoped later on he should be able to see her, and would then do his best to advise her on the matter. Once he said to his visitors: "Pray for me, for I can pray so little." One answered him: "But, Father, you always taught us that sickness itself was a prayer." He smiled sweetly, and replied, "Very true, so it is."

He said once: "I was so ill this morning that I could not make my thanksgiving after Mass." He was always accustomed to make a very long thanks-

giving after Mass; it seemed as if he could hardly bear to tear himself away from our Lord's feet.

But though he could not pray much at a time, he was most faithful to ordinary devotions. His beads were faithfully said, as also the Apostleship decade which he always had about him separate from his beads, and attached to a crucifix. Daily did he visit the Blessed Sacrament, and he had always in his pocket the Sailors' Prayer-book, which he was fond of, owing to its extreme simplicity, and the pages attest that it was well used. His spirit of reverence was shown about confession; he always liked, himself, to make the preparations for his confessor's visit, and, though so weak, insisted on kneeling. Among some fragments of paper on which he had made attempts to write a letter, there was one which looked like a note for confession, "Not taking sufficient pains about particular examen—want of gratitude." Probably this was all that even that keen eye could find amiss in his pure and submissive soul.

One of his spiritual children had possessed, for years, the conviction that some great cross would be sent to him in order to perfect his sanctity. Once speaking to him about the long sufferings that Lady Georgiana Fullerton had undergone before death, he said, "Well, you see she was so good, she won the grace of being allowed to suffer." And this child of his felt sure that he too would *win the grace* of some special suffering, and now she saw that her conviction had proved a true one, and she wrote:

"Words cannot tell the suffering it was to see

the change in our beloved Father, and how constantly passages from the fifty-third chapter of Isaias would come into my mind. His illness had disfigured his face of spiritualized beauty, the grace of movement and the melodious voice were gone, and the infirmities of sickness were upon him, naturally so refined. The words, *And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity*, were so perfectly fulfilled in him.

"It made me realize a little bit of what our Lady must have suffered when she saw *Him* once *beautiful above the sons of men*, so reduced by His Passion that it was true to say, *There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness*."

His face was one which grew in beauty as he grew in spirituality; it was emphatically a "holy" face. One of his brethren says: "You could not look at him without seeing he was an interior man."

The following description of a priest from a poem already quoted, is an exact word picture of the Father:

Mild the pure fervour of his watchful eyes,
Meek with serenity of constant prayer,
The luminous forehead, high and broad and bare;
The thin mouth, though not passionless, yet still
With a sweet calm that speak an angel's will,
Resolving service to his God's behest,
And ever musing how to serve Him best.
Not old, nor young; with manhood's gentlest grace,
Pale to transparency the pensive face—
Pale not with sickness, but with studious thought,
The body tasked, the fine mind overwrought;
With something faint and fragile in the whole,
As though 'twere but a lamp to hold a soul.

A friend who visited him about this time writes: "I saw the dear Father in Manresa in June, and received his blessing. How changed and suffering he looked, but how resigned and how saintly; it has been a privilege to know him. Thanks to the Sacred Heart for these blessings."

He varied greatly, and on some days he was much better than on others. On the eve of the feast of the Sacred Heart (May 31st) the Mother General found him almost like himself, and he said: "I have been longing to know how you were going on." Then he listened as he was wont to do, and gave her spiritual direction as usual.

He had the comfort of visits from his youngest sister, Margaret. They were tenderly attached to each other, and there are frequent allusions in his letters to her fond solicitude for him. He never forgot any of his relatives or old family friends, but always spoke of them with keen affection.

It was suggested that a type-writer might be of use to him, and he caught at this with some eagerness, because it seemed a possible means of communicating with those at a distance to whom he knew the loss of his letters was a severe deprivation, or to whom he thought he could do good. He even scratched a line to the Mother General to say he would like the Hammond type-writer hired for him as she had proposed, adding, with his usual thought for others, "I am improving in strength."

The type-writer was procured, but, alas, it proved a failure, though the poor Father tried hard to succeed, for type-writing, though doubtless a

relief to the hands, is not so to the head; and it was the effort of thinking and composing his letters which the Father could not accomplish.

On the feast of St. Aloysius, he saw Father Whitty, S.J., who wrote afterwards: "Then he was looking well, and both he and I hoped that God was going to leave him for a little more work."

He often drove out and enjoyed his drives, and, as Brentford is only four miles by road from Roehampton, he went more than once to the convent there, which he had not visited for twelve years.

His intention had been to see the new Preservation Home, which had just been built in the convent ground, but the fatigue was too much; he preferred sitting still in the parlour.

On one of these visits he appeared so much better that the Sisters were overwhelmed with joy. This amused and delighted him; it was like a gleam of sunshine from the days gone by. His last visit was on the feast of St. Anne, when there was Benediction; and so the last memory of him in that house is of his kneeling, with head bowed down, in an attitude of deepest reverence to receive the blessing of our Lord.

Father Dignam had once written to his sister: "You know that with God there is a Mother's side," and this came to memory when it was found that his sister had been appointed Sub-prioress of the convent at Haywards Heath, and would come over at the end of July to take up her charge.

A meeting was arranged to take place between them at Victoria Station, and, accordingly, Father Dignam went thither with a companion on July the 30th; but by one of those occurrences which we call accidents, the train leaving Bruges was for some unexplained reason an hour late. Consequently the Ostend boat missed the mail train from Dover, and the travellers were detained at Dover for two hours, while Father Dignam was waiting for them at Victoria. At length the train came in, and the brother and sister at last met and passed an hour together—one of those hours which are sometimes given as a foretaste of the things God has prepared for them that love Him. She was much struck with his emaciation, but he replied with a smile: "Oh, don't mind; I am often like that." They spoke together as spiritual Father and child, and he said at parting, "All is well with you; I am quite contented."

Father Dignam always spoke of all his Religious brethren with affection, and had an ingenious way of defending them when blamed, which some people did on purpose to draw out his answers.

To a friend who saw him he spoke of his inability to remember at times, adding: "It is a humiliation to lose one's memory in this way, but I fear we Religious, with our surroundings, don't get much humiliation out of it."

He meant, of course, that the solicitude of his Religious brethren did so much to supply the need. His infirmarian may truly be said to have been—eyes, ears, hands, feet and memory to him.

Early in August the Poor Servants of the Mother of God had a retreat at Roehampton, and several of the Sisters and local Superiors making it, who had not seen Father Dignam for years, called upon him and received a few words of advice from his lips. "Do we tire you, Father?" said one of them. "Oh no," he said, "you interest me too much for that." When the Mother General saw him on August the 5th she spoke of his meeting with his sister, while his face lighted up with joy at the memory. She saw him again on the 10th, and they had a long conversation on the affairs of her community.

When taking leave of him he came to the front door as he always did, and, generally speaking, he would stand there with a grave, wistful look on his face, but this time he was smiling the bright smile of other days, *full of a sweet, peculiar grace*, and so her last memory of him is that radiant smile.

When Father Dignam had been ill at Bruges, in 1871, and the nuns begged him to refrain from saying Mass for a few days, he replied: "I cannot; Mass is my life—without Mass I should die;" and in all his severe illnesses afterwards his great effort was to resume saying Mass as soon as possible.

On August the 16th his feebleness at Mass alarmed those around him, and the Father Rector was obliged to tell him that he must refrain from offering the Holy Sacrifice for a few days; but he knew too well that it would be for ever.

He said to the Father Rector that he only wondered he had been allowed to say it so long,

and then in a low voice, so as to be hardly audible: "Death must be now at hand." His weakness increased, and in a few days afterwards he was unable to leave his room.

He often rallied; on his feast-day, August 28th, he was able to take interest in letters and pictures sent to him, and he would read his letters over and over again during his illness and keep them for a long time in his hands. On August the 29th he was so much worse that the last sacraments were given, which he received with deep devotion.

On September the 5th the report sent to his sister was: "Our dear Father still continues to improve slowly; but very slowly. This last attack has weakened him very much, so it will naturally be some time before he will be even what he was lately. He sends you his blessing with every good wish."

There were constant variations in his state. On the 11th the report was: "Not so well, the weakness of last week has returned, and for the last two days he has not been sitting up at all."

When questioned as to whether he felt any pain, he answered: "No pain, but so very weary." He was tasting his Master's portion—weary and very heavy.

The report continues: "Oh, he is so good, he takes everything I ask him, if he can."

When he said he had no pain, he must have meant by that no additional or acute pain, because the weakness itself was suffering, and the constant lying in one position in his emaciated condition must have

been agonizing; truly in his bed he was lying on his cross, but he always made little of his sufferings to the last.

Prayers were constantly rising up. A novena was begun to St. Anthony and bread for the poor promised. He joined in this novena—the prayers were said by his bedside every night. He left his bed and sat in his arm-chair for hours together. He did not speak much, but on the feast of Our Lady of Dolours, which fell on the 16th, he spoke of his ordination on that feast twenty-seven years before. Once he said in his usual spirit of unselfish self-abnegation, "I must be a great bother to you all; I am such a miserable creature, I cannot even die."

He received Holy Communion daily. "When I ask him," wrote the infirmarian, "he always smiles sweetly, and says, 'Oh, yes, I should like to.'"

He was able to receive messages and have letters read to him, and he would send messages in return, and when unable to speak would do so by smile and gesture, and thus "a blessing and grateful thanks" was sent to Haywards Heath on the 21st, and he would constantly send his blessing to the S.M.G. nuns and to some others. No doubt he often said his own prayer: "Give us, O Lord, great sorrow, abiding sorrow, sorrow for Thy sake alone. Make us true penitents all our lives, and especially when we die. Amen."

At times his mind would wander a little, and once he said: "I have not seen my sister for eighteen years." This was touching, both as

showing how near she was to his heart, and also because at one time they had been separated for exactly eighteen years, from the time when as a boy he went to see her at Bruges, in 1851, to his return thither as a Jesuit priest, in 1869.

Sunday, the 23rd, was the anniversary of his first Mass, and then, for the last time, he received his Viaticum. He was no longer able to sit up even in bed, and this was a great increase of suffering, for sitting up had been an "immense relief," but never did a word of complaint pass his lips.

After that he was too weak to swallow, so his last food on earth was the Bread of Angels.

On September the 25th, Father Purbrick wrote to his sister at Haywards Heath: "I was with the dear Father this morning, and found him very weak and the breathing laboured; last night he seemed so very feeble that it was thought best to give him the last blessing. He is evidently conscious, for he replies by a squeeze of the hand, but he does not speak. He is never left, and is quietness and patience itself."

Long before Father Dignam had once written to a spiritual child:

"You know that when all seems darkest the 'Everlasting arms are underneath,' and God's love and compassion are as great behind the veil as if you could see Him still. Trust and rest." And now he had entered "behind the veil," and could neither speak of nor see the things of earth, but the "Everlasting arms were underneath."

On Monday he seemed to be quite speechless

and almost unconscious, but when there was occasion to move him he fell a little heavily against the Brother Infirmarian, and to the astonishment of the latter, he opened his eyes and said clearly, "Brother, I hope I did not hurt you." These were his last words; no thought of self, only of others to the very end.

As he lay calmly on his cross waiting for death, he seemed so truly to fulfil one of his favourite passages of Scripture, "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for Thou, Lord, only hast singularly established me in hope."

All was peace around that death-bed. The spirits of evil seemed to have no power to trouble him; he was dying in the bosom of the Society, his loved Mother, the prayers of his watchful brethren constantly made around him, and a cloud of prayers rising up for him from loving hearts without.

The report on Tuesday was, "Sinking fast, conscious at intervals; but unable to speak." What was passing between the soul and its God we may not know; but, surely, it was "O Jesus, I wish to fall asleep in Thy Heart. When I draw my last breath, I will put my heart into Thy open Side."

The night drew on, and three o'clock struck before the dawn of Wednesday, the day dedicated to St. Joseph, of whom he had fondly said: "St. Joseph is my father; he will not be far from me when I die." There was neither sigh nor struggle, the breath came a little faster—literally he breathed forth his soul into the Heart of Jesus, and ended his life in His Love on one of the closing

days in the month of our Lady's Dolours, whom he had so loved, and who had watched over him so tenderly from his birth to his death.

To fall beside my King,
O joy, to feel
My love for Thee is sealed
With death's strong seal!
Clasped in Thy loving Arms
No more to part
Calmly to fall asleep
On Thy pierced Heart.

Father Purbrick wrote to Father Dignam's sister: "Your beloved brother's combat is over, and we have no doubt that he has come out of the battle of life more than a conqueror, through the strong help of that Sacred Heart to which he was so devout, and for which he had won so many souls and such countless acts of devotion. He passed away quite quietly at five minutes past three this morning, and so secured all this morning's Masses, and carries with him the grateful esteem and tender affection of his brethren in Religion, whom for so many years he has edified and helped. More than nine hundred Masses will be said for the repose of his soul. You have, indeed, all the highest and holiest reasons for consoling yourself in the natural grief which it is impossible you should not feel in parting from a brother, and such a brother. R.I.P. May God above all console you."

The infirmarian wrote, "You see dear St. Anthony has not failed with his usual goodness, he has *found* him his home—alas! too soon for us, not one bit too soon for him. Truly I miss our dear Father

immensely; it has been such a sweet pleasure doing anything for him, for he has always been so kind, gentle, patient, and in every way a *perfect* invalid, never a word nor a complaint, always satisfied and grateful for the least little service done for him."

By the great kindness of the Fathers some were admitted to see him after his death. The Poor Servants of the Mother of God made a large cross of white flowers to lay upon him, weaving into it the offerings of those who would fain have helped them, but could not come. He was beautiful in death, with a smile upon his lips. In his lifetime he had a playful way of smiling, with his eyes closed; it seemed as if he were doing that now, and as if his lips would unclose and say: "O if you only knew—if you could only see how true it all is that we have learnt together—if you could only see what He is and *know* what His Heart is." The words floated into the mind of one who stood there:

"*As we have heard—so have we seen—in the City of our God.*"

If some of his children, remembering the angelic purity which, as they thought, hung around him, think also that he never lost his baptismal innocence, there is certainly no evidence in his life to disprove their loving confidence.

He was born on the feast of St. Michael, in May. He was buried on Friday, the eve of his feast, in September—the angel of truth and reverence whom he so resembled. The previous days had been dull and damp, but on this morning the sun came out and the dewdrops glistened brightly on the dark

green foliage of the avenue and shone on the white-robed choir as, after the Requiem Mass, they came down the path to the cemetery singing *In Paradisum*. The coffin was carried by the Brothers with its cross of white flowers, and the community followed. Outside the cemetery were twenty-one of the S.M.G. Sisters; no one else was present.

Many silent tears were shed; the celebrant (Father M'Swiney, S.J.) completely broke down. Around the grave rose the magnificent strain of the *Benedictus*: "*And thou shalt go before the Face of the Lord to prepare His ways and to direct our feet into the way of peace.*" And so he who had so striven to prepare the way for his Master was left to rest in His peace. As the Poor Servants of the Mother of God retraced their steps down the avenue, they might well have said:

> Go, elect soul, rejoice.
> Receive thy great reward;
> And yet forget not those—
> Thy little ones—who go
> Like some sad wayfarers
> When Heaven lets out the snow.

Their loss was indeed irreparable. "*For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ yet not many Fathers. For in Christ Jesus by the Gospel I have begotten you.*"

Letters of condolence were sent to his sister at Haywards Heath, and also to the Mother General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, from some of which the following extracts are given:

. . . . . .

"He was a really spiritual man, and led many, very many souls to high places in Heaven."

"Few in England have done more for our Lord's Sacred Heart."

. . . . . .

"His loss will be felt by many, for I imagine there are few convents in England which have not, either directly or indirectly, come under his helpful influence."

. . . . . .

"I had abundant opportunity for seeing, and knowing his great zeal in God's cause and his worth as a religious brother. He is a great loss to us all. In addition to his own work, he took a very warm interest in anything anyone else was doing for the greater glory of God."

. . . . . .

"He was exceedingly devout to the Sacred Heart, and himself imbibed, and afterwards inculcated on others a horror of harsh and cruel ideas as to the nature and actions of that God, Who is by nature and essence a God of Love. This gave him a great power in the direction of souls. Persons were attracted to Religion through him."

. . . . . .

"I say a daily prayer by the dear Father's grave, and do not forget you, he will help you more than ever. To live such a life of special devotedness to the Sacred Heart and then die in the Society, is surely a pledge of a very high place in Heaven."

. . . . . .

"May our life and death be like to his.—R.I.P."

. . . . . .

"It is only those who really knew him, and the interest he had in souls under his direction, that can understand the feeling of desolation that one has now. . . . I never understood till he taught me, what the Sacred Heart is to us, and what we are to It.

"I can safely say that I owe my spiritual life, and anything there is good in me, to his teaching."

. . . . . .

"God alone can comfort you, and He alone can find one to take Father Dignam's place for you. . . . His work for the Sacred Heart will have won him a great reward in Heaven."

. . . . . .

"Our Lord has indeed sent us a cross, and you, more than anyone, must feel the weight of it. . . . Your Father, your Helper, your Guide—he will help you now from Heaven."

These letters might be multiplied. From numerous quarters and from persons in every class of life, there went up a cry of sorrow and desolation: "What shall I do without him? No one can replace him to me." But all was spoken in a spirit of resignation, and with great trust that he would help them from his heavenly home; and many have believed that since his death they have received sensible help from his intercession.

Two letters of Father Dignam's have been purposely kept till the last, because they seem to contain a last farewell to all his spiritual children to whom he could not speak from his dying bed.

When he was very ill in 1890 one of his children thought he would not recover, and she asked him what she should do in that case. He replied: "If I am to die, my child, you would be as you are now—in God's hands. I would not have you take any resolution, but only to be sure that it was best for you. If and when God should send one to help you, you would use that help—if not, you would be sure He would take care of you Himself. I would not have you *bind yourself* to any prayer for me—God knows not because I doubt my need of them, for alas! I am one who has greatly offended Him—but because first, the prayer 'Thy Kingdom come,' will never be made without coming to my aid; secondly, because it is never for the interests of the Sacred Heart that a heart should be *tied* in prayer; lastly, because Jesus Christ loves me more than you do. Do you understand me?"

A week after Father Morris' death he wrote to one who bitterly mourned that loss: "I fear it is true that you will feel the loss more as it goes on. I do not doubt in the least the entire generosity with which you will bear it. You have not learnt his lessons so ill as to fail in that, but the times will be many, the privations will be keenly felt, when the *Sume et Suscipe* will cost you drops of blood. God strengthen you and make you true, my most dear child."

But these must not be his parting words. "He being dead yet speaketh," and he surely would bid us not to stay weeping by his grave—not even to dwell too much on the blessed meeting to come

when " we shall be always together with the Lord." Now he is with his Lord, helping Him more than he did on earth, for his work is to *plead along with the Pleading Heart of Jesus* for us and for the world, and he bids us surely not to lose the precious time that remains to us to promote the interests of Jesus, to spread the Apostleship, to gain souls, to plead with the Pleading Heart that His ever-living intercession may not be forgotten, and to say often the prayer he loved the best, striving to make it always a reality, first in our own souls,

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